

The Rise and Demise of the World Economic Herald, 1980-1989

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## ABSTRACT

The *World Economic Herald* was a newspaper founded in April 1980 and was closed down by the Chinese government in May 1989 due to its dissident voice. The *World Economic Herald* was widely regarded as the most influential and important weekly newspaper in China in the 1980s. It became the leading publication pushing political as well as economic reform in China. This key publication in history has yet to receive much scholarly attention. By examining the evolution of the *World Economic Herald* from 1980 to 1989, this thesis explores the political and financial support behind the newspaper and, more importantly, the changing contents of the *World Economic Herald*. The year 1985 is seen a turning point for the *World Economic Herald*. After 1985, the *World Economic Herald* moved gradually toward being more of a politically dissident newspaper from an economic newspaper. The changes in the political patronage behind the newspaper played a crucial role in the fate of the *World Economic Herald*.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

CCP      The Chinese Communist Party

PRC      People's Republic of China

CPPCC   Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference

*SJJDB*   *Shijie jingji daobao* (World Economic Herald). (Shanghai, 1980-1989)

*RMRB*   *Remin ribao* (People's Daily) (Beijing)

## Chapter I. Introduction

After the end of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), China entered into a new era of development under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping. The decade between 1979 and 1989 was a period of rapid change in China. Particularly at the sphere of economics, various reforming mechanisms were introduced and enforced. Typical changes included: the shift from a centrally planned economy to a market driven economy, the introduction of various forms of responsibility systems, and the restructuring of the banking and financial sector such as the development of stocks, bonds and labor service markets. Reforms on the political side, however, were not at a corresponding rate with economic reforms and lagged far behind.

The opening up of the country consequently helped the development of media in China. After the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) seized power in 1949, press and media in China were under tight control by the Chinese Communist government. “In 1950, all book publishing was brought under the government’s General Bureau of Publications, while book selling was centralized in the Xinhua chain. Magazines and newspapers were reorganized, with some journals being closed and the rest brought under party control by the mid-1950s.”<sup>1</sup> Especially during the years of the Cultural Revolution, the press was under extremely strict control by the government. No private publications were allowed to exist. As scholars observed less

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Nathan, *Chinese Democracy*, New York: Knopf : Distributed by Random House, 1985, 157.

than 200 newspapers survived the onslaught of the Cultural Revolution. Yet, after the launching of the reforms, one immediate change was the increased volume of information available through the officially sanctioned mass media. Disbanded publications during the Cultural Revolution were rehabilitated and new periodicals started to proliferate. The number of newspapers increased to 320 nationally in 1979, immediately after the start of reforms. Lynn White III noted that the first half of the 1980s was a banner period for emerging periodicals; more than half of the newspapers in China at the beginning of 1986 were less than 5 years old.<sup>2</sup> And by 1987 the number of newspapers rose to a total of 2,509 (only 255 of which were dailies) with a combined annual circulation of 25.98 billion copies.<sup>3</sup>

The main reason for this drastic increase was due to the policies of Deng Xiaoping, whose primary focus was economic growth. In order to pursue this, it was necessary to loosen restrictions on the media. In practice, businesses and enterprises were allowed to start newspapers to promote the exchange of business information, as well as to provide a means of advertising. As a result, the number of economic newspapers and magazines increased significantly from 1980 onwards. According to incomplete statistics submitted by the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications, there were 130 economic newspapers in the country by April 1985, excluding hundreds of smaller economic newspapers run by grass-roots units and distributed in small

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<sup>2</sup> Li Cheng and Lynn T. White III, "China's technocratic movement and the World Economic Herald," *Modern China*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (July 1991), 344.

<sup>3</sup> Cheng and White III, "China's Technocratic Movement", 344.

cities, towns, or counties.<sup>4</sup> This drastic increase without doubt was fundamentally tied to the goal of reform by the Chinese government. For the CCP, media has been an effective tool of propaganda. Hence as tools of propaganda, the press and mass media are used to help promote economic reforms as well as to mobilize the masses to participate. In this sense, economic newspapers were playing an increasingly significant role in the nation's economic development, and they are closely integrated with the nation's recent economic reforms.<sup>5</sup>

The Shanghai based World Economic Herald (*Shijie jingji daobao*) was one of the most influential Chinese newspapers in the 1980s. The Herald has been well known as China's most liberal and outspoken newspaper. It was founded in June 1980 and was forced to close by the Chinese Communist government in May 1989. At the same year, in June, massive numbers of Chinese students marched into Tiananmen Square protesting for democracy. In eyes of most scholars, the Herald played a crucial role in triggering the student pro-democracy movement in 1989 [Nathan, 1989; Wright, 1990; Hsiao and Yang, 1989].<sup>6</sup> The goal of this study, therefore, is to explain how the

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<sup>4</sup> Won Ho Chang, *Mass Media in China: the History and the Future*. Ames : Iowa State University Press, 1989, 131.

<sup>5</sup> “*Dangxia zhongguo de jingji xinwen baozhi*” [Economic Newspapers in Present Day China], *Xinwen Zhanxian* [Journalistic Front], January 6 1986,5.

<sup>6</sup> See, Andrew Nathan, *Chinese Democrac*, 152-171

Hsiao Ching-chang and Yang Mei-rong, “Don't Force to Lie: The Case of the World Economic Herald.” In Chin-Chuan Lee, *Voices of China: the Interplay of Politics and Journalism*, New York : Guilford Press, 1990: 111-121

Kate Wright, "The political fortunes of Shanghai's World Economic Herald," *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, No. 23 (January 1990): 121-132.



Herald came into existence and developed into a leading politically dissident newspaper, and why a liberal newspaper could emerge and survive in China at that time.

Founded in 1980, the Herald quickly took over the market and became one of China's most influential newspapers after publication of several initial issues. The success of the Herald, as some scholars suggest, was due to the "independent" nature of the paper. Different from most other state-controlled newspapers, the Herald was independent from its founding. Because it was self-financed, the Herald was relatively free from institutional links to the government [Hsiao and Yang, 1989].<sup>7</sup> The Herald therefore has been commonly considered as an "unofficial" newspaper in China. As Kate Wright noted, the Herald "is by far the most famous of the handful "unofficial" publications that have emerged in China since the introduction of economic reforms."<sup>8</sup>

As its title suggests, the World Economic Herald was a newspaper about economics. It not only covered world economic news, but also commented on the domestic economic situation. To be more specific, the newspaper introduced new ideas about new economic development and economic management both at home and abroad, popularized economic knowledge, and exchanged research results concerning both the national economy and global

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<sup>7</sup> Hsiao Ching-chang and Yang Mei-rong, "Don't Force to Lie.": 111-121

<sup>8</sup> Kate Wright, "The political fortunes" 121.

economic relations.<sup>9</sup> In the periods of reforms (the 1980s), the nature of reporting on economics certainly contributed to the success of the Herald. Indeed, scholar Chang Won Ho argued for a positive relationship between the Herald and China's economic reconstruction project. As Ho suggested, the role of the Herald in promoting China's economic reforms has been widely recognized. Among the economic newspapers generated in those years, the Herald was considered "as an authority on both world and national economic issues."<sup>10</sup> Also because of its influence, "the Chinese government used the newspaper to test the practicability of new policies."<sup>11</sup>

Chang's student Ni Hua further advanced this claim. In her 1987 MA thesis "World Economic Herald: a Case Study of Economic Newspapers in China", Ni studied the Herald as an economic newspaper from 1980 to 1985. Ni concluded that the Herald played a positive role in China's economic reforms; it did support the policies of the Party and the government in its news coverage and its treatment of the news content. The Herald presented itself as a showcase in which the general public could see changing economic situations outside China; it also functioned as a window through which the outside world could observe the economic development in China.<sup>12</sup>

Why was an economic newspaper shut down by the Chinese

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<sup>9</sup> "Weile zhongguo de xiandaihua—shijie jingji daobao de guoqu wunian" [For China's Modernization—Five years of the World Economic Herald], *Jiefang Ribao* [Liberation Daily], July 4 1985, 3.

<sup>10</sup> Chang, *Mass Media*, 131.

<sup>11</sup> Chang, *Mass Media*, 131.

<sup>12</sup> Ni Hua, *World Economic Herald: a case study of economic newspapers in China*, unpublished MA Thesis, University of Missouri, 1987, 119.

government in 1989? The evolution of the Herald into a dissident newspaper has been examined and analyzed by a number of scholars. But most of them have focused on the political impact of the Herald. Li Cheng and Lynn White III in their article “China’s Technocratic Movement and the World Economic Herald” have argued that the development of the World Economic Herald was closely connected to China’s technocratic movement. The Herald helped promote the idea of “science” and “democracy.” In Cheng and White’s view, “Chinese political development in the 1980s was primarily technocratic.”<sup>13</sup> In 1978, there were only few top posts occupied by technocrats, but more and more top posts were filled by technocrats from 1978 onwards. As they have argued, there was a dramatic shift in cadre policy that promoted technocrats, and this change was “part of an elitist movement in which the World Economic Herald played a critical role.”<sup>14</sup>

With the goal of democracy promotion, the Herald from 1986 on dauntlessly challenged national leaders to undertake vital political reforms [Hsiao and Yang, 1989]<sup>15</sup>. In reporting political news, the editors adopted a technique metaphorically referred to as “hitting line balls” (*cha bian qiu*)—aiming for the very edge of the ping-pong table to the edge of the permissible in China. The role of the Herald in accelerating the growth of democracy in China therefore stood out among the Chinese news media

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<sup>13</sup> Cheng and White III, “China’s Technocratic Movement”, 344.

<sup>14</sup> Cheng and White III, “China’s Technocratic Movement”, 343.

<sup>15</sup> See Hsiao Ching-chang and Yang Mei-rong, “Don’t Force to Lie.”: 111-121.

[Nathan, 1986]<sup>16</sup>. As a result of democracy promotion, the Herald directly triggered the pro-democracy student movement of 1989. Kate Wright noted, “The story of the demise of the Herald is in many ways a history of the democracy movement in Shanghai and a barometer of the political climate throughout the seven-week-long protest in China’s largest city.”<sup>17</sup>

According to these scholars, the economic growth and political development had direct impacts on the press in China. As scholar Chin-Chuan Lee pointed out: “the fate of media reform has followed the swing of political pendulum during the 1980s. Press freedom gained ground when economic and political reforms surged ahead, but it lost momentum when they retreated.”<sup>18</sup> The Herald’s forced termination after the Tiananmen crackdown, therefore, symbolized the re-imposition of heavy-handed controls over the press and presaged rough times ahead for media reformers.

Although the Herald has received certain amount of attention from scholars, available works on the history of the Herald are few. Detailed scholarly analysis about the Herald is particularly deficient. There are many questions that still remain ambiguous or unanswered, such as the origin, operation, and nature of this newspaper. For example, how did the Herald come into existence and evolve into a leading dissident newspaper? Why did

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<sup>16</sup> Andrew Nathan, *Chinese Democracy*, 152-171.

<sup>17</sup> Wright, “The political fortunes”, 122.

<sup>18</sup> Chin-Chuan Lee, *Voices of China: the Interplay of Politics and Journalism*, New York : Guilford Press, 1990, 7.

none of its contemporary papers come even close to its prominence and achievement? And more importantly, was it truly independent, as scholars described? The “independent” and “official” view as described earlier in many ways is problematic. This view simplifies and obscures the complex relationship that the Herald had with Chinese reform-minded officials, particularly the Zhao Ziyang and Hu Yaobao administration. Noteworthy to mention is that the Herald had a very powerful board of directors and advisors, including the mayor and vice mayor of Shanghai, members of the Central Committee of the Party, and the director of special commissions under the State Council. The patron-client relationship between these intellectuals and political leaders certainly granted them protections. In Timothy Cheek and Carol Lee Hamrin’s view, they were establishment intellectuals that “primarily engaged in intellectual activities that define the ‘ultimate’ or the ideal...and have affirmed, accepted and served the ruling authorities.”<sup>19</sup> These establishment intellectuals held a “higher kind of loyalty” to the government. They criticized Maoist radicalism but endorsed the idea of Marxism-Leninism generally and accepted the political legitimacy of the Communist regime. In this way, “as a subgroup within the ruling elite,” establishment intellectuals collaborated in a system in which the party occupied the ultimate power of control and authority.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Cheek and Hamrin, *China’s Establishment Intellectuals*. Armonk, N.Y. : M.E. Sharpe, 1986, 3-4.

<sup>20</sup> Cheek and Hamrin, *China’s Establishment Intellectuals*, 3.

In light of this, it is therefore not hard to conclude reasons why the Herald was tolerated by the CCP regime. But other questions rise: when and how did the Herald challenge the Party's censorship and interference? And what caused this? Why was the Herald suspended by the government eventually? By examining the evolution of the Herald, one can see not only the reasons behind the Herald's shut down, but more important, the relations between media reform and the pro-democracy movement.

The purpose of this study, as stated earlier, is to analyze the rise and demise of the World Economic Herald, particularly its role in the reforms of the 1980s. Due to the limited amount of scholarship on this newspaper, the study have had to rely on primary sources. The study is based on content analysis by analyzing the Herald from 1980 to 1989. From 1980 to 1989, there were a total of 441 issues published by the Herald. The study will go through these issues and identify patterns or changes in the Herald's reporting during the years. In addition, the study will look at other newspapers and periodicals published during the same years for any relevant information about the Herald. This will include the Chinese-language newspapers and periodicals: China Journalism Yearbook (*Zhongguo xinwen nianjian*), the People's Daily (*Renmin ribao*), Liberation Daily (*Jiefang ribao*), Weihui Daily (*Weihui bao*), New China Monthly (*Xinhua Yuekan*), and Commonwealth; and the English-language newspapers the New York Times, and South China

Morning Post. It will be argued that the Herald was important in promoting economic and political changes in China. The rise and demise of the Herald, however, elucidates the relationship between the pro-democracy movement and China's media reform. The Herald was not established as a dissident newspaper, its evolution towards political dissent was tied to the changing of political climate of the 1980s. It will also be argued that although the Herald claimed to be an "independent" newspaper, it was not completely independent from the control of the government or other groups. Yet its "semi-official" status assured quality news and commentaries that were unprecedented compared to other contemporary publications. This study is divided into five chapters. Chapter I—Introduction—outlines the nature and research questions of the study; includes a literature review on the subject and an explanation of research methodology. Chapter II provides a historical background of China's reforms of the 1980s including media reform. Chapter III describes the structure of the Herald and its changing editorial policies between 1980 and 1989. Chapter IV by content analysis it examines the newspaper's publication issue by issue over 9 years. The chapter examines the evolution of the Herald, particularly its turning from an "economic herald" to a "political herald," and reasons behind this. Chapter V will summarize the findings of the research and make concluding remarks.

## **Chapter II. China's Reforms in the 1980s**

### *Economic Reform*

After the end of the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese government launched its reform projects under the new leadership of Deng Xiaoping. Among others, the economy was the primary target of the Chinese government. The goal of the Chinese government was to transform China's old centrally planned economy to a newly price-oriented market one. Starting in 1979, economic reforms; particularly rural economic reforms were first being introduced in China. Aimed at emancipating China's 800 million peasants from poverty and modernizing the rural economic structure and system, the rural economic reforms consist of two major components: 1) the introduction of various types of responsibility system and; 2) the adjustment of China's rural economic structure.

The responsibility system aimed to link agricultural output to peasants' income, to "grant the right of self-determination for the collective economy to the localities and to pay attention to the peasants' material interests in order to stimulate their enthusiasm for work."<sup>21</sup> The responsibility system proved successful as it not only related income to output, but also provided farmers with incentives to produce. It has greatly liberalized productivity in the rural areas. By 1984, 5.69 million production teams in China's countryside had adopted the responsibility system, with fewer than 2,000 teams left to continue

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<sup>21</sup> See SJJDB, November 30, 1981.



the traditional pattern.<sup>22</sup> By 1986, 180 million—98 percent of the total farming households in China—had moved into various forms of the responsibility system.<sup>23</sup>

Later on, with the success of reform in rural areas, the Chinese government launched reform in urban areas. Starting from 1984, a market economy began emerging in China's cities; incentive and reward mechanisms based on performance were introduced; stocks, bonds and labor service markets emerged; separation of ownership from managerial authority was emphasized; and more autonomy was given to enterprises to “decide on investment, research and development, production, marketing, prices, and personnel matters.”<sup>24</sup> Meanwhile, in order to attract foreign investment and technology, special economic zones were set up in China. China's urban economic reform was targeted for a shift from direct to indirect regulation, and from micro to macro control.

The whole process of these urban economic reforms was accompanied by strong resistance from conservative Party officials. They argued that the urban economic reforms went too far and needed brakes. For instance, Li Peng, former Prime Minister of China, emphasized that it was not yet the time

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<sup>22</sup> “Report assesses rural economic reforms”, *China Daily*, January 28, 1987. Quoted from, Xu Yu, *The press, and social change: a case study of the 'World economic herald' in China's political reform*. Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Iowa, 1991

<sup>23</sup> “Report assesses rural economic reforms”, *China Daily*, January 28, 1987. Quoted from, Xu Yu, *The press, and social change*, 1991

<sup>24</sup> E.J. Perry and C.Wong eds, *The Political Economic of Reform in Post-Mao China*. Cambridge, Mass.: The Harvard University Press. 1980.

to adopt private ownership; the China's privatization should be a slowly process. With the resistance coming from conservative officials such as this, it is not hard to see why political reforms lagged far behind economic reforms.

Compared with the success of economic reforms, political reforms stagnated in the 1980s. The Chinese government was reluctant to carry out political reforms. In order to divert public attention from potential political changes, the government repeatedly stressed the importance of economic reforms. This could be illustrated by the news reporting coverage at that time. Newspapers such as the Party organ the People's Daily (*Renmin ribao*) gave heavy coverage to rural economic reform between 1979 and 1983, while they selectively ignored issues relating to political reform.

### *Press Reform*

The press in China has been tightly controlled by the Chinese government. Under the regime of the CCP, the press has been used to agitate and motivate the people to support and follow the line and policies of the Party.<sup>25</sup> One typical feature of the Chinese press under the CCP has been its use for propaganda. Having established its own propaganda department, the CCP used propaganda to gather support for Party policies and programs since its founding. For the CCP, press became the most effective tool to mobilize and educate people. Through the newspaper, Party leaders could 1) have

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<sup>25</sup> Ni Hua, *World Economic Herald*, 30.

access to every major social group and the means to advertise Party policies and; 2) demoralize any opposition voices by using the press.<sup>26</sup> In the words of Mao Zedong, “The role and power of the newspapers consist in their ability to bring the Party program, the Party line, the Party’s general and specific policies, its tasks and methods of work before the masses in the quickest and most extensive way.”<sup>27</sup>

After the founding of the People’s Republic of China (PRC), the degree of government control of the press increased. In the PRC, all mass media are owned and operated, directly or indirectly, by the Party. Private ownership is not permitted. The Party controlled all mass media through its Propaganda Department and makes the media its tool and “mouthpiece” for its own interests. The Propaganda Department is directly controlled by the Party’s politburo; it has branches in each province, autonomous region, and municipalities directly under the Central Government. All newspapers, magazines, publications, presses and news agencies and television and radio stations are absolutely controlled by the Party’s Propaganda Department. The Media and Publications Bureau’s view on illegal publications is that “any newspapers, journals, books, audio and video tapes which are publicized socially without the government’s permission are illegal and will be subject to

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<sup>26</sup> Patricia Stranahan, *Molding the Medium: The Chinese Communist Party and the Liberation Daily*. Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1990.

<sup>27</sup> Mao Zedong, *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol.4, 1965, 241. Also see, Xu Yu, *The press, and social change*, 1991

confiscation, destruction and punishment.”<sup>28</sup> When the newspaper shaped events, it must do so within the framework of the accepted Party line. As Judy Polumbaum says in her article, one of the major reasons why “hegemonic communication has prevailed over petitionary communication in China, is because the state owns the major channels of mass communication.”<sup>29</sup> Lu Dingyi, former head of the Propaganda Ministry, once said: “The press is an instrument of class struggle. It is one of the weapons used by the proletarian class to overthrow capitalism and to build up socialism. It must be tightly controlled by the government.”<sup>30</sup> In addition, the media in China must subject itself to self-censorship. As Judy Polumbaum says, “journalists in China have been assigned a difficult balancing act as intermediaries between the nation’s political authorities and the public. They are instructed to serve as both ‘eyes, ears, and mouthpiece’ of the Chinese Communist Party and government and ‘eyes, ears, and mouthpiece’ of the people.”<sup>31</sup>

Nonetheless, the Chinese press in the 1980s went through remarkable changes. The first observable change was the significant increase in the number of newspapers. The number of newspapers rose to 320 nationally at the start of the economic reforms in 1979, in contrast to less than 200 newspapers of the

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<sup>28</sup> “Urgent call for reform of the Chinese Media”, *China Daily*, December 1, 1987.

<sup>29</sup> Chin-Chuan Lee, *Voices of China*, 7.

<sup>30</sup> See *Xinhua Monthly (Xinhua yuebao)*, Vol. 8, 1987, 133.

<sup>31</sup> Chin-Chuan Lee, *Voices of China*, 33.

end of the Cultural Revolution.<sup>32</sup> Second and more important were changes in the structure as well as the content genres of newspapers. In the 1980s, coverage on investigative reports and human interest stories increased. “While Party organs produced 16% of the total titles of publication, there was a steep rise in the volume of varied publications ranging from targeted-pop-papers (23%), to enterprise papers (25%).”<sup>33</sup> This is in stark contrast to the Cultural Revolution era when only Party organs were allowed to publish. In addition, journalism education expanded rapidly; Western influences were prominent in China at that time. The open-door policy not only brought Western journalism educators to China, but also introduced Western notions of journalism into curricula and textbooks.<sup>34</sup>

The change in the press to a great extent was due to economic reforms. In correspondence to the economic reforms starting from 1979, the Chinese press shifted its focus from class struggle and political mobilization to economic reconstruction. Consequently, coverage of economic news increased and became the primary area of reporting. News coverage now contained more information on social news and less propaganda. Newspapers became more readable and approachable.

However, these changes on the press did not touch the fundamental structure of the press system. Most of the innovations were merely limited to

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<sup>32</sup> See Brantly Womack, “Editor’s Introduction,” in *Media and the Chinese Public: A Survey of the Beijing Media Audience, a special issue of Chinese Sociology and Anthropology*. 3-4, 1986, 16-29.

<sup>33</sup> Chin-Chuan Lee, *Voices of China*, 16.

<sup>34</sup> Chin-Chuan Lee, *Voices of China*, 40.

technical or operational aspects. The role of the news media as a propaganda tool remained unchanged. The Chinese government was actually reluctant to implement a complete reform in journalism and newspapers. This reluctance can be illustrated by the ups and downs of press reform in the 1980s. The voices for press reform in 1986 were increased, while during the campaigns against “bourgeois liberalization,” the journalistic reform efforts cooled; but before and after the 13<sup>th</sup> CCP Congress in 1987, the “wind of press reform rose again.”<sup>35</sup> The CCP actually tried hard to keep the press as a tool of propaganda. Deng Xiaoping said at the beginning of the reform in 1980: “newspapers need to be the supporting base for the government, to propagate good things of socialism, and the rightness of Marx-Leninism and Mao’s thought.”<sup>36</sup> Hu Yaobang, former General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee, said that although journalistic institutions are managed as a kind of enterprise, they are above all mass media organizations—“No matter how many reforms are introduced, the nature of the Party’s journalism cannot be changed.”<sup>37</sup> In a meeting in February 8, 1985, Hu emphasized: “The journalist cause of the Party should serve as the organ of the Party by the nature of it. This is justified and must not be abandoned...The journalist work of the Party must speak for the Party and government, give

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<sup>35</sup> Chin-Chuan Lee, *Voices of China*, 104.

<sup>36</sup> *Zhongguo xinwen nianjian* [China Journalism Yearbook], Research Institute of Journalism, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, comp., (Beijing: Chinese Social Sciences Publishing House), 1986.

<sup>37</sup> Won Ho Chang, *Mass Media in China*, 57.

opinion and guidance in accordance with the line and policy of the Party.”<sup>38</sup>

In this sense, the increasingly diversified reporting did not translate into the Western sense of increased relative autonomy. Rather, these changes still reflected Party policies—they were aimed to carry out Party-defined goals and tasks.<sup>39</sup>

Also, the Seventh Five-Year plan in 1985 pointed out that “Journalistic units must correctly propagate the Party’s line, principles, and policies while at the same time satisfy the people’s various needs for information dissemination, knowledge diffusion, cultural entertainment, etc.”<sup>40</sup> In 1986, Zhu Houze, the head of the Propaganda Department, stressed that “press reform is different from the entire economic reform. It is not a fundamental reform. Its purpose is to perfect the socialist system.”<sup>41</sup>

In 1987, officials at the State Media and Publication Office stressed that any publication without the state’s permission was illegal and had to be severely punished. The current Party General Secretary Jiang Zemin at the time articulated that mass media in China must be in the firm hands of genuine Marxists so as to avoid any Westernizing deviation as exemplified by the Herald. Li Ruihuan, another leading Party official, also reemphasized that the Chinese mass media must give priority to the Party’s positive propaganda.

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<sup>38</sup> “*Zai dang de lingdaoxia de baoye*” [On the Journalism under the Party] RMRB, April 4 1985, 1.

<sup>39</sup> Chin-Chuan Lee, *Voices of China*, 16.

<sup>40</sup> See Wenhui Daily (*Wenhui Bao*), October 14, 1985, 2.

Quoted from, Xu Yu, *The press, and social change*, Unpublished PhD thesis, 1991

<sup>41</sup> See Xinhua Monthly (*Xinhua Yuebao*), No. 10, 1986, 140.

Quoted from, Xu Yu, *The press, and social change*, Unpublished PhD thesis, 1991

Apparently, the CCP did not want a substantive reform of the press. As a result, censorship and state interferences were still common throughout 1980s. Due to the CCP's reluctance to conduct political reforms, it is not surprising that changes of the press were limited to quantitative and operational terms. As Liu Binyan said, "in the last decade, China's press freedom has increased, but it should be noted that this is not something that the CCP desired."<sup>42</sup> At the beginning of the reform, the Party consciously expanded press freedom in two or three papers in Beijing, including the Party organ the People's Daily. But even in those 2 years, the People's Daily staff constantly received phone calls of condemnation, asking why this or that article was published and why some statements were printed.<sup>43</sup> As Liu Binyan said, "although the CCP never wanted to grant more freedom, the people's freedom has increased in the last 10 years—not because of the benevolence of the Party, but because of the impact of the economic reforms and people taking advantage of the reforms."

### *The Herald and Shanghai Press*

Since the end of the nineteenth-century, Shanghai has developed into one of the biggest industrial and commercial center of China. As early as the 1930s, Shanghai's economic importance had already been widely recognized.

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<sup>42</sup> Liu Binyan, "Press Freedom: Particles in the Air" in Chin-Chuan Lee, *Voices of China: the Interplay of Politics and Journalism*, New York : Guilford Press, 1990. Also see, Liu Binyan, *A higher Kind of Loyalty : a memoir by China's foremost journalist*, New York : Pantheon Books, 1990.

<sup>43</sup> Liu Binyan, "Press Freedom: Particles in the Air", 201



After the founding of the PRC, Shanghai continued as a commercial center. Since 1949, Shanghai has played a significant role in China's economy and occupied a special position in China's economic development. Shanghai's fiscal income accounts for about eight to ten percent of the nation's annual revenue. According to the statistics of 1984, the average per capita income in Shanghai was \$1,400, far above the national average per capita income of \$300.

In addition to its economic importance, Shanghai played a crucial role in China's press development. Shanghai has a long history of being a press and media center. *Shen Bao* [Shanghai News], one of China's earliest and most influential modern newspapers was founded and run in Shanghai. *Xinwen Bao* [Newspaper of Current Affairs], China's first business newspaper, was also started in Shanghai. The newspaper industry of Shanghai was well developed before the PRC and had assembled a large group of professional newspaper people. Clearly recognizing the importance of Shanghai's press, the CCP paid particular attention to managing and controlling the press of Shanghai in the 1950s after the founding of the PRC. Indeed, the CCP launched a series of reforms in Shanghai's press. The Shanghai press has played a key role in CCP's nationhood recreation project.

With the opening to the outside world in the late 1970s, Shanghai immediately became an open port city. As an industrial and commercial center, the city's business activities significantly increased in correspondence

to the rapid development of the national economy and the Party's modernization drive. As a result, economic newspapers started to emerge in Shanghai. In 1980, one year after the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee passed the decision on China's economic reforms, the World Economic Herald was born in Shanghai.

### **Chapter III. The Founding of the Herald: An Institutional Base**

With the purpose of “reflecting different opinions, especially new thoughts, if they are helpful to China’s reforms and openness,”<sup>44</sup> the World Economic Herald was founded in Shanghai on June 21, 1980. The paper was co-sponsored by the Chinese Society of World Economics and the Shanghai Research Institute of World Economy of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Founded as a bi-weekly newspaper with eight pages, the Herald expanded itself to a weekly with 14-16 pages during its 9 years of existence.

#### *Financial Base*

Scholars commonly consider the Herald an “unofficial” newspaper that separated from newspapers run by the Party [Wright, 1990; Hsiao and Yang, 1989].<sup>45</sup> Although the “unofficial” stance of the Herald is disputable and needs further discussion, the Herald was truly an independent newspaper financially. The paper was founded without the financial support from the government. The paper paid taxes, salaries of the staff, and other fees on its own. The Editor-in-Chief Qin Benli obtained twenty thousand *yuan* of prepaid advertising money, and borrowed an office, desks, and some chairs from the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences to start the Herald. Because of financial difficulties during its early days, the Herald did not own any printing houses or have typesetters. Qin leased a small room from the

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<sup>44</sup> See SJJDB, February 27, 1989, 1.

<sup>45</sup> See Kate Wright, “The political fortunes”: 121-132.

Hsiao Ching-chang and Yang Mei-rong, “Don’t Force to Lie”: 111-121

Liberation Daily (*Jiefang ribao*), an influential CCP paper; shared copy readers with Shanghai Youth (*Shanghai qingnian bao*), Shanghai *Yi Bao* and other papers, and worked in the Liberation's printing room. The major financial resource of the Herald was from advertisements: the paper had an advertisement section of four or more pages. This section greatly helped the financial situation of the paper: as the paper's influence and circulation increased, more and more people chose the paper for advertising. Also thanks to its financial independence, the Herald was able to break "away from the higher-level financial department's strict regulations."<sup>46</sup> Since it was financially independent, the paper conducted personnel recruitment itself: Qin and other founders of the paper searched for editors and reporters themselves. The propaganda department therefore could not easily interfere in the paper's editorial directions since they gave it no money. As its former editors articulated, this financial independence in turn "gave the Herald a little more autonomy and freedom."<sup>47</sup>

### *Personnel*

Headed by Qin Benli, the Herald was founded by a group of senior Chinese journalists, economists, and veteran Party officials with an average age of over 60 at the time. Qian Junrui, the director of the Herald, was a well-known economist and was once the Beijing Bureau Chief of Xinhua

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<sup>46</sup> Meirong Yang, "The Case of the World Economic Herald", in Chin-Chuan Lee, *Voices of China: the Interplay of Politics and Journalism*, New York : Guilford Press, 1990, 186.

<sup>47</sup> Meirong Yang, "The Case of the World Economic Herald" 186.

News Agency, Vice Minister of Culture, and head of the Chinese Society of World Economics. Qin Benli, the chief editor of the Herald had once been the Executive Deputy Chief Editor and Party Secretary of Weihui Daily, and Associate Director of the Shanghai Institute of World Economy (the director is responsible for the overall management and operation of the paper, and the chief editor is for editorial content). More importantly, most of the Herald's editors had suffered during Mao's Cultural Revolution. For instance, both Qian and Qin were persecuted in the 1950s. Qin was labeled as rightist in 1957 and was forced to leave his position at Wenhui Daily; and during the Cultural Revolution, Qin was sent to a labor camp in Feng Xian county near Shanghai. Similarly, Qian was also sent to prison for eight years during the Cultural Revolution. Rehabilitated after the Cultural Revolution, Qin became the Associate Director of the Shanghai Research Institute of World Economy, and Qian became Director of the Institute of World Economy of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences as well as Professor of Economics at Peking University.

The Herald had an advisory committee, which was responsible for the paper's policies and direction. Almost all members of the committee were leading national scholars and Party officials that included former Shanghai mayor Wang Daohan, famous economist Huan Xiang, Xue Muqiao, Ma Hong, and Yu Guangyuan. Table 1 lists the names and positions of the Herald's board of directors and advisory council:

TABLE 3.1: Board of Directors and Advisory Committee of the World Economic Herald in 1983

Name	Position in the Herald	Positions at other places
Qian Junrui	Director	Director, Institute of World Economy, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences; President, Society of World Economics; Standing Committee Member of Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference
Qin Benli	Editor-in-Chief Vice Director	Associate Director, Institute of World Economy, Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences; Standing Committee Member of Shanghai People's Political Consultative Conference
Huan Xiang	Honorary Director	Director, International Studies Center, State Council; Standing Committee Member of the National People's Congress; President, International Law Society
Wang Daohan	Honorary Director	Mayor of Shanghai
Xin Yuanxi	Director	Vice Mayor of Shanghai
Xue Muqiao	Senior Advisor	Standing Committee Member of Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference; Director General, Economic Research Center, State Council
Yu Guangyuan	Senior Advisor	Member of Central Advisory Commission of the Chinese Communist Party; President, Society of Territorial Economics; Vice President, China International Cultural Exchange Center
Chen Hansheng	Senior Advisor	Senior advisor of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences; Advisor, Society of World Economics
Xu Dixin	Senior Advisor	Standing Committee Member of Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference; Honorary President, Society of Foreign Economic Theories
Ma Hong	Senior Advisor	Alternate Member, Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party; Director General, Technical Economics Research Center, State Council
Xu Xuehan	Senior Advisor	Director, Economic Research Center, State Council
Sun Huairen	Senior Advisor	Vice President, Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences

See Li Cheng and Lynn T. White III, "China's technocratic movement and the World Economic Herald," *Modern China*, Vol. 17, No. 3

Interestingly, most of the Herald's advisors were members of the Society of World Economics, which was founded on 28 April of 1980—two months before the establishment of the Herald. We therefore can say that the Society of World Economics had direct connection to the founding of the Herald. The Herald had a distinguished board of advisors made up of leading national scholars or political elites. These patron-client ties not only distinguished the Herald from other newspapers, but also greatly helped the Herald in its development. These advisors provided the Herald with very important support and help.

### *Goals of the Herald*

The goals of the Herald can be illustrated by its name. Originally, the Herald planned to use the name of "World Economy", but with the advice from Qian Junrui, Qin Benli decided to change the name to "World Economic Herald" (*Shijie jingji daobao*), which the word "Herald" in Chinese means "leading and pioneering." The rationale for such a name, according to Qin, was because the Herald "aimed to clear the way for reforms and opening"; pioneering and innovating therefore were necessary.

The purpose of the Herald was to introduce advanced ideas and experiences from foreign countries to help China's economic reforms; "to let

the world understand China, and to let China understand the world.”<sup>48</sup> In the

trial edition of the Herald, there was a “Message to Readers” that stated:

As China is opening itself to the outside world, China needs to understand the outside world. Construction of China’s socialist modernization is closely linked with the world’s economy. To meet the needs of developing circumstances, World Economic Herald has been initiated...We hope that this economic newspaper will become a window through which our readers can see and understand the outside world and make some contributions to the construction of the socialist modernization of our nation.<sup>49</sup>

With the goal of pioneering for reforms, Qin stated, “the Herald must be bold and insightful.”<sup>50</sup> He emphasized: “the Herald is not the organ of any municipality, government, or party. The Paper belongs to the scholars and reformers who support China’s economic transformation.”<sup>51</sup> In support of this, the Herald maintained that the paper should be practical and realistic and that it should voice its own views and opinions. Editors of the Herald shared and strictly adhered to this view; they often said that running a newspaper is not just a profession but a cause; they should close down the newspaper if they could not make it vivid and appealing for its readers.<sup>52</sup>

Successfully the Herald made its fame for being bold. Shi Ximing, former deputy director of the Propaganda Department of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee, said that newspapers should have their

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<sup>48</sup> Zhang Weiguo, *Qin Benli de cha bian qiu* [Playing at the edge : Qin Benli and his journalistic practice]. Brookline, MA : Er shi yi shi ji Zhongguo ji jin hui, 2000.20

<sup>49</sup> “*Laizi renmin ribao de yifengxin*” [A Message from Renmin ribao], June 20, 1980, 1.

<sup>50</sup> “Play the political touch ball.” Commonwealth, June 1, 1989, 55-57.

<sup>51</sup> D.R. Shanor, “China’s Trumpet of Reform,” *World Press Review*, October 1987, 38.

Also see, Xu Yu, *The press, and social change*, 1991

<sup>52</sup> “*Weile zhongguo de xiandaihua*” [For the Modernization of China], *Jiefang Ribao* [Liberation Daily], July 4, 1985, 3.



own voices and definite views and that they should be clear what they are for and what they are against. He praised the Herald highly, saying, “You have done a very good job in this respect. You are very appealing to readers and there is a strong voice in your pages.”<sup>53</sup>

### *Readership and Distribution*

The circulation of the Herald had a significant increase after its establishment in 1980. As Table 3.3 suggests, the circulation of the Herald experienced a continuous increase between the years of 1980 and 1984 and reached its peak in 1984, which was about 303,500 copies per week. In addition to its large circulation numbers, the Herald had a diverse network of distribution: it was not only distributed in China, but also nearly 60 foreign countries. Certainly, compared with other big newspapers especially government-supported ones, the circulation of the Herald was not significant. But the influence of the paper was much more than its circulation numbers indicate. In foreign distribution, the Herald only lagged behind the People’s Daily, the biggest and the most authoritative newspaper in China.<sup>54</sup>

In addition to distribution, the composition of readership of the Herald was very important. The Herald was a newspaper run by intellectuals, and its readers were primarily intellectuals, too. As Qin Benli said, “the levels of the Herald’s readers are higher, which includes the policy-making circle in

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<sup>53</sup> “Zhuhe yu xiwang” [Congratulations and Hopes], SJJDB, June 20, 1985, 2. Also see, Xu Yu, *The press, and social change*, 1991

<sup>54</sup> “Dangxia zhongguo de jingji xinwen baozhi” [Economic Newspapers in Present Day China], *Xinwen Zhanxian* (Journalistic Front), January 6 1986, 5.

governments, especially those reform-minded government officials; intellectuals, especially university teachers and college students; theoretical circles: researchers on world and domestic economy; and managers of enterprises.”<sup>55</sup> The composition of readership directly contributed to the paper’s success.

The Herald enjoyed great popularity among the Chinese people at all levels. It gained high praise among top leaders, particularly reform-minded ones. Qian Junrui once said that the high government officials and influential economists he knew all considered the paper a good and successful one.<sup>56</sup> The most significant figure would be the former Prime Minister Zhao Zhiyang. According to Zhao’s secretary, the Herald became the first Monday reading of Zhao, and Zhao always recommended what he considered valuable articles to other party and government officials. Shi Ximin, deputy director of the Propaganda Department of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee, once wrote to the Herald, “I enjoy reading your paper, you are the agitator of the four modernizations and the propagator of the economic reforms.”<sup>57</sup> Other top leaders, such as Zhu Houzhe, the head of the Propaganda Department was a strong supporter of the Herald; Ren Zhongyi, the first Party Secretary of Guangdong, and Guo Feng, the First Party

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<sup>55</sup> See SJJDB, February 27, 1989, 1.

<sup>56</sup> Qian Junrui, “*Tongguo shijie jingji daobao de yunzuo kan xinshidai de xinwen gongzuo*” [To Explore the Newspaper Work in the New Era by Looking at the Operation of World Economic Herald], *Shijie jingji yu zhongguo jingji* [World Economics and China Economics] Shanghai, Fudan University Press, 1983, 8. Also see, Xu Yu, *The press, and social change*, 1991

<sup>57</sup> “*Zhuhe yu xiwang*” [Congratulations and Hopes], SJJDB June 20, 1985, 2. Also see, Xu Yu, *The press, and social change*, 1991

Secretary of Liaoning, sent memoranda to government officials in their provinces, urging them to read the Herald regularly.<sup>58</sup> The officials in Shanghai economic departments also wrote to the Herald saying that they were the Herald's faithful readers and they were very much interested in the attractive content of the newspaper.

The Herald gained its reputation for being bold and insightful also among intellectuals and students. One professor at the Southwest Transportation University in China said that the Herald was a good paper for intellectuals and it had touched upon many delicate economic issues that nobody dared to try in the past. One student at Beijing Business School wrote to the editor in 1982, saying that of fifty students in his class, thirty-seven subscribed to the Herald.<sup>59</sup> And one young reader wrote to the Herald expressing his thanks to the Herald for helping him make up his mind to become a businessman.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> See SJJDB, August 19, 1984, 1.

<sup>59</sup> See SJJDB, June 21, 1982, 7.

Cheng and White III, "China's Technocratic Movement", 344

<sup>60</sup> Cheng and White III, "China's Technocratic Movement", 344

TABLE 3.2: Circulation of the World Economic Herald, 1980-1989

Year	Number of Pages	Average Circulation Per Issue	Annual Circulation
1980	8	N/A	N/A
1981	8	N/A	3,685,618
1982	12	89,000	4,959,000
1983	12	264,900	13,774,800
1984	12	303,500	15,138,800
1985	12	196,700	10,100,000
1986	16	142,000	7,265,000
1987	16	170,000	8,840,000
1988	16	185,600	9,460,000
1989	16	164,000	2,952,000

Source: *Zhongguo xinwen nianjian* [China Journalism Yearbook], Research Institute of Journalism, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, comp., (Beijing: Chinese Social Sciences Publishing House), 1982-1989

TABLE 3.3: Number of Issues of the World Economic Herald Published Each Year:

Year	Starting Issue Number	Ending Issue Number	Total Number of Issues
1980	1	13	13
1981	14	65	52
1982	66	116	51
1983	117	167	51
1984	168	219	52
1985	220	270	51
1986	271	321	51
1987	322	372	51
1988	373	423	51
1989	424	441	18

Source: *Zhongguo xinwen nianjian* [China Journalism Yearbook], Research Institute of Journalism, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, comp., (Beijing: Chinese Social Sciences Publishing House), 1982-1989

### *Format and Content*

As stated earlier, the Herald was a bi-weekly newspaper when it was founded in 1980, and changed to weekly since 1981. During its 9 years of publication, the Herald expanded its page numbers from 8 to 12, and later to

16, in correspondence to the circulation increase. The Herald distinguished itself in many ways, both in format and content. Compared with many other Chinese newspapers at that time, the Herald had a unique page layout. Adopting the format and styles of Western newspapers, the Herald had an English title in the “New York Times” font, and the first page looked like a show window that used bold headlines to list the outlines of every major topic discussed in the paper. These headlines were often inspirational and forceful, and more importantly, eye-catching. For example, headlines included “A Corrupt Government Will Only Eat Its Own Bitter Fruit,” “Political Reform Is the Guarantee for the Success of Economic Reform,” “Economic Democratization Will Lead To Political Democratization.” In words of Qian Junrui, “the Herald has created its own distinctive style which should have existed a long time ago in Chinese journalism, and the Herald has set a good example for other newspapers to follow.”<sup>61</sup>

As its title suggests, the Herald was a newspaper about economics. The paper’s content is comprehensive, mainly providing world and domestic economic news, commenting about current economic situations and issues in China, popularizing economic knowledge, introducing new economic development and economic management both at home and abroad, and exchanging research results concerning both the national economy and the

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<sup>61</sup> Qian Junrui, *To Explore*, 5.

Also see, Xu Yu, *The press, and social change*, Unpublished PhD thesis, 1991

world economic situation. Meanwhile, the paper paid lots of attentions to economic theories and principles. The paper had a special section named “Self-Study University,” which systematically presented lectures on economics. This column attracted a large number of readers who were interested in economics.

When it started in 1980, the paper focused primarily on economic issues particularly the world economy. But as time went by, the paper not only shifted its focus to the domestic economy—both the current situation and developmental prospects--but also placed heavy coverage on political reforms.

Different from other newspapers, the Herald was distinct in its reporting coverage. During its 9 years of existence, the Herald strove to present a distinct and true voice to the Chinese people. The paper tried to provide solid information filled with facts and substance rather than vague and general views or opinions. Its underlying philosophy was to “let the facts speak for themselves.” For example, the Herald spent large coverage on economic activities in the Soviet Union, some Eastern European countries, and Taiwan, subjects that most other Chinese newspapers chose to neglect. Instead of biased coverage, the Herald tried to reflect the economic reality in those countries or regions with facts, especially about Taiwan. Before the 1980s, most of the newspapers in mainland China either played down the economic reality in Taiwan or paid little attention to the economic situation in Taiwan. In order to help the general public on mainland China to gain the correct

image and have a better understanding of situations in Taiwan, the Herald published lots of articles about Taiwan such as “Characteristics of Taiwan’s Economy.” “Life of the People in Taiwan” “Taiwan’s Economic Importance in Global Market” and “The Development of Taiwan’s Economy: History and Prospect.”

On domestic issues, the Herald’s reporting was always bold and insightful. For instance, in 1981, the Party and the central government launched the anti-spiritual contamination campaign. In response to this, most newspapers avoided mentioning learning contemporary Western economic theories. Yet, the Herald published an article saying that it is very important and helpful to study Western economic theories in order to promote the modernization of China<sup>62</sup> Doing this well without retribution was due to the Herald’s strong “back mountains”, as well as Herald’s successful ping-pong strategy of “hitting line balls” (*cha bian qiu*) that kept the support and protection of reformers in the ruling group of the CCP. As Qin explained later, the borderline strategy meant: “the Herald adheres to the principles of reforms and open policy, to push our reports to the maximum limitation of (the CCP’s) tolerance and reduce risk to the minimum. At the same time, catch any opportunity to break through unreasonable limitation upon the freedom of the press, thus quickly expanding the scope and the depth of reports. Sometimes we seem to play the ball away from the border, but at least we

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<sup>62</sup> Qian Jurui, *To Explore*, 14.

Also see, Xu Yu, *The press, and social change*, Unpublished PhD thesis, 1991

survive.”<sup>63</sup>

Noteworthy to mention is that the news items published by the Herald were always exclusive. Because the paper did not want to follow the mainstream, it avoided publishing any news or articles published by other major Chinese newspapers. It tried to avoid using economic news released by the official Xinhua News Agency upon which the majority of Chinese newspapers were heavily dependent. Editors of the Herald made full use of news and stories supplied by foreign news agencies, as well as foreign newspapers or magazines and reports presented by authoritative economic organizations or institutions. The Herald established its own sources so as to guarantee the exclusiveness of its content. For example, the Herald reached an agreement with the Xinhua News Agency that all Xinhua foreign correspondents would be special correspondent of the World Economic Herald.

In addition, the Herald was active in organizing and sponsoring talks and conferences in various cities, such as Shanghai, Wuhan, Guangzhou, Tianjin, and many others. Some of these conferences were even televised nationwide.<sup>64</sup> Most other newspapers, however, only organized conferences in their own cities.<sup>65</sup> Moreover, it often interviewed famous figures. Since interview reporting had seldom been used in the Chinese press before the

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<sup>63</sup> See SJJDB, February 27, 1989, 3.

<sup>64</sup> Wright, “The political fortunes”, 351.

<sup>65</sup> Wright, “The political fortunes”, 351.



1980s,<sup>66</sup> the interviews featured in the Herald certainly caught people's attentions. Overseas interviewees were often scholars and government officials, such as Milton Friedman, Alvin Toffler, and Samuel Huntington, Michel Oksenburg, Harry Harding, Li Zhengdao, and ambassadors from many countries including the United States, the Soviet Union, Japan, and Australia.

As a result, the Herald provided more in-depth and exclusive information than other major Chinese newspapers. It also often approached big economic issues faster and provided more timely information than others. Most importantly, the Herald attempted to approach an issue from all aspects, presenting both positive and negative views, background information, explanations and comparative materials. In the words of Lu Ping, deputy editor-in-chief of the Herald, "our report must be in depth and profound and give the reader all dimensions of the issues."<sup>67</sup> Its news and issue reports have been called by readers "holographic coverage." As Table 3.4 shows,

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<sup>66</sup> Wright, "The political fortunes", 353.

<sup>67</sup> Meirong Yang, "The Case of the World Economic Herald", 186.

Table 3.4: The Herald and Other Major Newspapers In Terms of Timing Report

Issues Discussed	Date of Herald's Stories on the Issue	Date of other major newspaper's stories on the issue
Basic Economic Structure	January 13, 1981	January 26, 1981 (People's Daily)
Handling the relation between adjustment and reforms	February, 2, 1981	March 13, 1981 (Worker's Daily)
Speed of economic development in adjustment and reforms	September 7, 1981	A month or more late in other major newspapers

Source: this information is taken from Hua Ni, *World Economic Herald: a case study of economic newspapers in China*.

Having realized the Herald's influence and significance to the nation, the government also used the newspaper to test the practicality of its new policies.<sup>68</sup> Government officials usually liked to leak information concerning new policies through the Herald to the general public and detect the public response before they officially implemented the new policies.<sup>69</sup> The Herald became the window for the authorities to watch for the suitable atmosphere to introduce either political or economic changes.

As pointed out earlier, the Herald was aimed at promoting reform in China. The Herald was especially valuable when it deviated boldly from the CCP's tradition. Since the establishment of PRC, the CCP had never allowed an independent voice to exist. Therefore, a crucial question arises: how

<sup>68</sup> Chang, *Mass Media*, 128.

<sup>69</sup> Chang, *Mass Media*, 128.

could the Herald survive under the rule of the CCP for nine years? One essential reason for this was that the Herald was running in the waves of economic reform in the 1980s. As an economic newspaper, the Herald was helpful in pushing and enlarging these reforms. Especially in its early years, the Herald thoroughly reported the country's economic activities under the guidance of the Party. It paid tremendous attention to Party policies and provided large amount of spaces to news about economic reforms. As a result, the Herald survived under the rule of the CCP and gained recognition from the Chinese people. Yet, the Herald also evolved into a leading dissident newspaper, the next important subject for discussion.

## **Chapter IV. The Evolution of the Herald: 1980-1990**

The circulation of the World Economic Herald grew rapidly after it was founded in 1980. It increased from 89,000 copies per week in 1982 to 264,900 copies in 1983 and to 303,500 copies in 1984, the peak of its circulation. From 1985 onwards, the circulation of the Herald decreased slightly.. To understand these changes in circulation, it is necessary to examine the changes of the Herald's content over the years. As both Lucian Pye and Chin-Chuan Lee have observed, China's mass media not only voiced official slogans but "occasionally acted as a forum for advocating policy changes and alternatives."<sup>70</sup> This was also true for the Herald. The changes of content over time reflect a change of political climate in China but also the changing of values of political elites, government officials, and journalists. The evolution of the Herald can be divided into two major periods: 1980 to 1985, and 1986 to 1989. The first period was economics oriented, while the latter was more politically oriented.

### **The World Economic Herald: 1980-1985**

From 1980 to 1985, the Herald focused primarily on economic issues, both domestic and foreign. Starting in June 1980, the Herald initially chose to place its reporting focus on the world economy. It not only reported the situation and developmental experiences of developed Western countries, such as the U.S., Western Europe, Australia and Japan; it also gave a lot of coverage

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<sup>70</sup> Chin-Chuan Lee, *Voices of China*, 7.

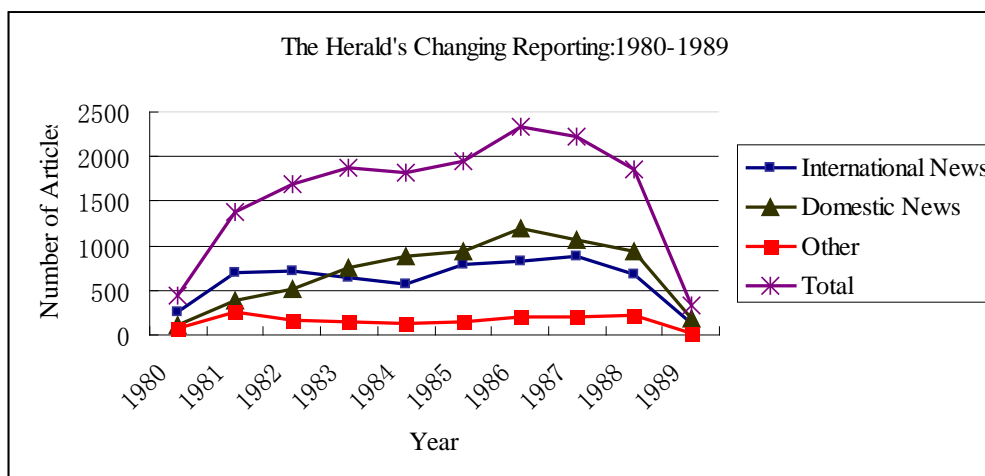
to less developed countries, such as the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and India. This choice of reporting on the world economy was made by the Herald intentionally. According to the Editor-in-Chief Qin Benli, this was due to: 1) the difficulty in reporting on the domestic economy in China at that time; and 2) the need to introduce Western experiences to support and push forward economic reforms in China. However, from 1981 onwards, the Herald gradually shifted its reporting focus from foreign to domestic issues. As the table below shows:

TABLE 4.1. Content of the World Economic Herald (Items)

Year	International News	Domestic News	Other	Total
1980	268	110	72	454
1981	711	397	254	1397
1982	728	528	163	1712
1983	640	751	148	1880
1984	568	885	134	1818
1985	774	947	146	1944
1986	851	1201	196	2358
1987	870	1079	198	2223
1988	661	959	227	1873
1989	123	189	21	339

Source: *Shijie jingji daobao: 1980-1989* [The World Economic Herald: 1980-1989], in microfilm. Shanghai: *Zhongguo shijie jingji xuehui* [China Society of World Economics]: *Shanghai shehui kexue yuan shijie jingji yanjiusuo* [World Economics Institute of Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences],

Graph 4.1 The Herald's Changing Reporting Interest: 1980-1989



Source: *Shijie jingji daobao: 1980-1989* [The World Economic Herald: 1980-1989], in microfilm. Shanghai: *Zhongguo shijie jingji xuehui* [China Society of World Economics]: *Shanghai shehui kexue yuan shijie jingji yanjiusuo* [World Economics Institute of Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences],

Apparently, starting at 110 items in 1980, the Herald's reporting coverage on domestic news increased year by year and reached its peak in 1986, 1987 and 1988. The paper's reporting on international news, in contrast, had no stable trend; it fluctuated over the years. Yet one thing is clear: the paper's reporting on domestic issues outnumbered international issues after 1983.

The editors of the Herald held a firm goal since the beginning of the paper: to present a unique and distinct voice to the readers. Due to this, the Herald maintained a bold and critical voice in its reporting throughout its nine years of existence. It always pointed out the inadequacies of China's reform projects. In the founding year of 1980, the Herald focused primarily on the modernization of China and the new directions of China's economic development. From June 1980 to 1981, the Herald gave considerable

coverage to how to understand the special conditions of China. In order to help readers to understand the government's modernization project, the Herald allocated much space to explaining what modernization is, and more importantly, "What is the Chinese Style of Modernization."<sup>71</sup> In particular, the paper gave large coverage to Zhao Ziyang's talk on the construction of the Chinese style modernization.<sup>72</sup> Consistent with Zhao's talk, the Herald claimed that China's modernization project needed to be based on China's local situation, i.e., it needed to take domestic conditions into consideration. "China's economic development needs to take issues of social development, economy, and international environment into consideration."<sup>73</sup> To elaborate on this, the Herald used the failure of the "Self-Strengthening Movement" as an example, informing its Chinese readership that it would be impossible for China to depend on buying advanced foreign practices and goods as the sole means of national development.<sup>74</sup> The economic policies of the government needed to be based on reality, not on idealism. Only by doing this could the government avoid further mistakes and achieve success.

Through reporting in this manner, the Herald successfully distinguished itself from other government-controlled newspapers. It successfully presented a fresh and distinct voice. The distinctive voice of the Herald can be illustrated by the headlines on the front page. For example, in regarding

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<sup>71</sup> See SJJDB, June 20, 1980.

<sup>72</sup> See SJJDB, September 30, 1980.

<sup>73</sup> See SJJDB, September 20, 1980

<sup>74</sup> See SJJDB, August 15, 1980. 1.

China's modernization, on July 15, 1980, the following headline was written: "No Single Country's Modernization Is Attained by Copying from Others." August 15, 1980: "China's Modernization Needs to Consider Domestic Situations". October 30, 1980: "We May Need Some Capitalism: We Cannot Allow To Die Now", "Employees May Invest and Buy Stocks of the Enterprises", etc. Also, the Herald initiated discussion of how to use capitalism to serve China's economic reforms, enhanced its reputation and earned support among reformers and students. As an editor said: "the Herald wanted the Chinese people to know the real situation in China, and further, to make the party more realistic and flexible."<sup>75</sup>

In addition, the timely reports of the Herald and insightful articles it presented helped to gain it support. In 1980, the most important events were two conferences: one was a forum of Chinese and Japanese economists held in Beijing in August, and the other was a forum about economy and technology circle of the capital that was held in Hong Kong in October. Both were very important to China at that time. In reporting the two events, the Herald used the titles "China's Modernization Construction Should Fit China's Very Conditions"<sup>76</sup>. And "Getting Well by Understanding the Conditions of the Country, to Solve the Problems of Development and Strategy." The Herald's detailed reporting and high quality comments and analysis greatly attracted and impressed readers.

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<sup>75</sup> Meirong Yang, "The Case of the World Economic Herald," 186.

<sup>76</sup> See SJJDB, March 9, 1981, 1.



It is easy to see that the year 1980 was a key foundation year. Although the editors of the paper shared a firm belief about presenting a unique voice, they did not have a clear goal for the paper's long-term development. Regardless, the Herald with its unique brand of reporting and insightful articles won the support of readers as well as from government officials. Its powerful "back mountains" further helped the development of the paper. This initial success in turn increased the Herald's confidence about its reporting, and this consequently helped and influenced the editors to reach decisions about the long-term goals for the paper. By realizing the importance of government support, editors at the Herald decided to stick more closely to the government reform policies. As a result, beginning from 1981, the Herald gradually shifted its focus to the domestic economy. Meanwhile, in order to increase the professional quality of the paper, the Herald allocated more coverage on economic theories. In response to readers' demands, in the late 1980s, the Herald opened a special section called "Self-Study University" to give lectures on economic theories and principles.

In 1981, the big focus in China was on the State Economy Adjustment Program, which the Herald reported heavily on. Launched by the Chinese reformers, the adjustment program was basically about how to change the CCP's old economic system of central planning to a new market-oriented one. The Herald spent large amounts of news, information, and comments to explain the importance of the adjustment programs and how much progress

had been actually achieved since the beginning of the reforms. Although speaking in favor of the government, the Herald never dared to point out problems and/or inadequacies of government policies. As the Editor-in-Chief Qin Benli stated: “the paper’s editorial policy was not only to point out problems in the economy reform, but also to stress they were the past. And the important thing is to point out the country has great prospect for future development, and hence to ask people to become involved in the reforms.”<sup>77</sup> Reporting such as this greatly helped the Chinese people to understand the current situation. The paper’s opinions, therefore, played an active role in the transition of the Chinese economic order from a restricted, centrally planned economy to a partly price-oriented market economy. The Herald helped the Chinese people acquire a stronger capacity of tolerance during this transition.

In 1982, the Herald’s focus had already shifted its attention to China’s domestic economy. The Herald now began to place more stress on in-depth analysis and interpretations of China’s economic changes rather than merely reporting the daily news. Beginning in 1982, as the economic reforms gaining strength, the need to enter the international market became apparent. The Chinese government began actively to promote “special economic zones.” Sticking closely to the government’s moves, the Herald gave heavy coverage to the introduction of “special economic zones”. The Herald sent staff

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<sup>77</sup> Zhang Weiguo, *Qin Benli de cha bian qiu*, 102.

members to Shanghai, Beijing, Fuzhou, Wuhan, Tianjin, Dalian, and Shenyang - eight big port cities in China - to interview city leaders and famous economists. The goal was to foster discussion about access to the international market and to make China's economy more connected to the international economy. The staff of the Herald tried hard to foster a strong basis for China's further reforms and, more importantly, to get more Party and government officials involved in these reforms.

By 1983, with the success of reforms in rural areas, economic reform in China moved to the second stage -- urban economic reform. China's urban economic reforms were primarily about the shift from direct to indirect regulation, from micro to macro control, and from a product economy to a planned commodity economy. Noteworthy of mentioning is that a market economy had already begun to develop in China at that time. In response to this, the Herald devoted one fourth of its pages to cover news and discussions, about the transition of reforms. For example, headlines included: "The Future of China Belongs to Reformers," "The Reforms Represent the Basic Interests of One Billion People," "The Old Ideas and Concepts Must be Changed and Reformed", etc. In addition, the Herald sent its journalists to many provinces, cities, and autonomous regions to investigate and report. In an editorial, "The Reforms Represent the Basic Interests of One Billion People," the Herald argued that the old equalitarianism structure of "Big Boiler Rice" and "Iron Bowl" should be reconsidered and questioned strongly.

The “Iron Bowl” made people lazy and the “Big Boiler Rice” made the state poor. The Herald’s reporting provoked strong reactions in Chinese society. Intellectuals, students, and government officials were all actively engaged in discussing the reforms. In this sense, the paper played a very important and active role in urging people and government officials to take part in the reforms.

As the above discussions suggest, during the years from 1980 to 1984, the Herald and its editors basically stuck to the subject of economic reform, acting as the mouthpiece of the reformers in the CCP. It tried to influence the Party’s policy-making, and in fact it did. The Herald with its unique reporting gained support from readers and, more importantly, from reformers in the CCP. Premier Zhao Zhiyang, head of the central propaganda department Zhu Houzhe and many other reformers in the CCP were strong backers. Due to this, the Herald never hesitated to publish, Deng Xiaoping’s reform ideas and, sometimes, to give liberal explanations of Deng’s ideas. The support from reform-minded leaders undoubtedly granted the Herald unusual freedom in its reporting. Noteworthy to mention the fact is that during late 1983, conservatives in the CCP launched the “Anti-Spiritual Pollution Campaign,” in which many newspapers underwent strict examinations by the government. Similar to others, the Herald was criticized for violating the personnel system by employing staff without considering

their political files; the staff member was also criticized for taking too many business trips. However, these charges were not pursued seriously and only represented a mild rebuke. The campaign did not influence the Herald as much as it did other newspapers. The Herald did not have to change the direction of its editorial policy, and the circulation of the paper still had continuous growth. In fact, both 1983 and 1984 were the years that the Herald achieved its highest circulation, with 1984 becoming the peak of the Herald's circulation (15,138,800 copies).

In June 1985, in commemoration of the fifth anniversary of the founding of the Herald, many newspapers including the Party organ People's Daily, Guangming Daily, Wenhui Daily, China News Agency, Central T.V. Station, Central People's Broadcasting Station, New China's Agency, Hong Kong Economic Herald, and almost all major medias in Shanghai wrote congratulation letters to the Herald. For example, People's Daily wrote a message praising the Herald:

You have made great achievements in the past five years. Being prompted by the mission of the time, you have tried every means possible and have done your utmost in exploring the road which would lead China to economic prosperity. You have demonstrated your global perspective, high strategy, and incisive views with a lively style and distinctive characteristic in your coverage and content. You've developed a school of your own in Chinese journalism. You spare no efforts in advocating reforms, and you have offered good ideas and opinions for the modernization of our nation...you are a good teacher for your counterparts and a helpful friend of readers. You are worthy of the name of the Herald.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> "Laizi renmin ribao de yifengxin" [A message from Renmin Ribao], SJJDB June 20, 1985,1.

Also see, Xu Yu, *The press, and social change*, 1991

In addition to newspapers and media, there were many government officials and scholars who also congratulated the Herald. Hu Jiwei, former standing member of the People's Assembly and former chief editor of People's Daily, wrote to the Herald:

You stand in the front of the economic reform, advocating, pushing and influencing it...you opened a window to let people know the world and make the reforms needed to perform on the stage of the world; your paper is carefully edited and, by developing its quality, attracts more and more readers; you have people committed to truth but not to employment as members of your strong staff board; you did not apply for government subsidies, did not contend for governmental establishment (rank), did not try to become an "organ paper" of the CCP or administrative structure, not kept a massive circulation on public expense; you have focused on how to serve readers and the reforms in China..."<sup>79</sup>

As the above discussion suggested, the Herald was actually not established as a dissident newspaper. It was founded in 1980 as an economy newspaper for reporting world economy news. However, as the newspaper gained support and consolidated itself, the editors of the paper developed a clearer aim and position for the newspaper. Under the liberal-minded leadership of Qin Benli, and the support from reform-minded government officials, the Herald gradually changed its goal to the one that aimed to help with the Chinese government's reforms, and more importantly, to push the reforms forward. This can be illustrated by the Herald's shift of focus from reporting world economy to domestic economy.

In the first five years of its publication, the Herald's reporting basically

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<sup>79</sup> "Hujiwei zhi Qinbenli de yifengxin" [A Letter from Hu Jiwei to Qin Benli], SJJDB, June 1985.

Also see, Xu Yu, *The press, and social change*, 1991

stayed within the Party line, despite its critical voice. Indeed, the Herald actively propagated government reform policies. However, as pointed out earlier, the Herald was closed down by the Chinese government in May 1989 because of its dissident voice. Hence if we consider the Herald as a dissident newspaper, we should make it clear that we are talking about the Herald after 1985. The crucial questions that need to be answered are: why did the Herald deviate from the Party lines? What caused this deviation? How did this dissident voice evolve over time?

### **The World Economic Herald: 1985-1989**

Different from the first stage of the Herald (1980-1985), the second stage of the Herald (1985-1989) was more politically-oriented. From the latter half of 1983 onwards, non-economic related articles began to appear in the Herald. By early 1985, the Herald started to report news of the positive effects of economic and political reforms in the Soviet Union and some Eastern European countries. For example, the issue of March 18, 1985 carried a news story entitled “Through Several Twists and Turns, the Eastern European Countries Recognize the Positive Effects of Private Economy.” In this report, the Herald explained how Eastern Germany changed its economic system to a private one, how the Polish Government let peasants trade their lands, and how did Yugoslavia developed a private economy. These were three former Communist countries.

The tendency towards political orientation became more and more obvious from 1986 onwards. Beginning in 1986, the issues of political reform were widely discussed in China. Due to various problems caused by the economic reforms, the Chinese people's voice for political change increased greatly. In response to this, the Herald gave heavy coverage to discussions of political reform. Over the years between 1986 and 1989, themes relating to political reform occupied almost the entire paper. Some people even accused the Herald of switching from an "economic herald" to a "political herald" and of being responsible for the student democracy movement of late 1986 and early 1987 by advocating "bourgeois liberalism."<sup>80</sup>

In responding to such charges, Qin Benli said:

Sooner or later, China will take the road of political reform. We in the newspaper business are like roosters heralding the break of the day. If we crow late, people will say we are lazy. If the crowing is earlier, we will wake people from sleep at night and they will be disgusted with us. Our heralding must be exactly at the break of the day.<sup>81</sup>

The heavy coverage of political reforms inevitably led to discussions of democracy and freedom, leading the Herald toward a higher level of deviation from the Party line. However, in order to get a clearer picture of the change of the Herald's direction, it is necessary to take the overall environment of Chinese society at that time into consideration.

### *The Problems of Reforms*

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<sup>80</sup> Zhang Weiguo, *Qin Benli de cha bian qiu*, 67.

<sup>81</sup> Zhang Weiguo, *Qin Benli de cha bian qiu*, 68  
Also see, Xu Yu, *The press, and social change*, 1991.



The economic reforms in early 1980s caused many problems, and these problems started to emerge and became intense in the mid-1980s. First of all, the success of the economic reforms in the rural areas caused serious economic imbalances. Peasants, especially those near the cities and towns; now became richer than the manufacturing workers. Workers' dissatisfaction with the reforms hence increased. Realizing the importance and need for reform in the cities, the Chinese government decided to introduce reforms into the manufacturing sector, in other words, among workers. However, in practice, these reforms were not as easy as they had been for peasant farmers. They conflicted with the worker's established interests. They also created an even more over-heated economy.

Meanwhile, the imbalance and conflict between constructional demand and resource supply posed another threat. The country's limited resources could not meet the demands made by China's high speed of economic development. On the one hand, the Chinese government was active in constructing new projects; on the other hand, resources such as capital, raw materials, and transportation were limited and could not catch up. This resulted in the situation of serious inflation. Prices in the cities began to rise, while people's working wage remained unchanged.

In addition, enterprise reforms encountered severe problems as well. Originally, the goal for the government was to reform the enterprises by introducing a competitive mechanism; by doing so, the enterprises would

develop positively through competition. However, the actual results turned out badly. Many enterprises spent most of their operational funds on welfare and bonuses rather than reproduction; some even monopolized production of heavily demanded commodities so as to engage in speculation.

Moreover, the price reforms created further chaos. Price reforms created strong inflation and imbalances between supply and demand. As the Chinese government decided to increase the price of commodities, people's wages lagged behind and consequently contributed to the failure of the price reforms. The Chinese government, afraid that the unemployment rate would get worse, showed reluctance to reform its labor and employment system which were characterized by overstaffing, unwieldiness, low efficiency, and "eating from the same big pot". The failure of the price reform, however, could be viewed as a result of failure of reforms in other sectors such as the lack of necessary independent enterprises, market regulations, entrepreneurs, and relevant laws.

Furthermore, inside the Party corruption became very prevalent in China at the time, to the point of becoming a serious threat to the reforms. Although official corruption was not something new, it became rampant during the urban economic reform. As Jiang Zemin, the former Party General Secretary in China said: "serious corruption among the Party cadres and leaders was an important factor" responsible for the 1989 pro-democracy

student movement in China.<sup>82</sup> To sum up, the slow pace of political reform was a major obstacle to further economic change. The introduction of a market mechanism created a situation in which the old political system and the new economic system coexisted and mingled. This in turn created problems of chaos and imbalance for the reforms. Increased problems of inflation and corruption, in turn, stimulated the Chinese people's desire for further political changes.

It was in this big historical context that the Herald changed its editorial direction. The editors of the Herald clearly recognized that without a substantial political reform, the economic reforms could not progress further. As a result, the Herald became more politically active; it reported more on political than economic issues, and its voice became increasingly critical.

### *Personnel Change*

In addition to the changing political climate of the mid-1980s, a newly appointed editorial board was another important factor in contributing the Herald's change of editorial policies. The year 1985 is a marked turning point for the Herald. The paper had significant personnel changes after 1985. From 1985 onwards, many founding editors retired, leaving only Qin Benli and young people who joined the paper. By 1989, the average age of the Herald's editorial board dropped to 38, which is in great contrast to the

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82. Xu Yu, *The press, and social change*, 1991

average age of 63 – in 1980 when the Herald was founded.<sup>83</sup> Compared to previous editorial board members who were well-known scholars and/or renown public figures, most of the new editorial board members were unknown recent college graduates. As Table 4.2 below shows, most of them had university educations and, more importantly; many of them had formal journalism training. Given the fact that the Western journalism influences were prominent in China in the 1980s, it is not hard to see that these young people had been heavily influenced by Western ideas of press freedom and, as a result, were bolder and radical in their political activities, especially compared with their predecessors in the Herald.

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<sup>83</sup> See SJJDB, February 27, 1989.

TABLE 4.2.: Board of Editors of the World Economic Herald (1988)

<b>Name</b>	<b>Educational Background</b>	<b>Position in the Paper</b>
Qin Benli	Chaoyang College, Beijing	Editor-in-Chief
Zhu Xingqing	High School Education	Deputy Editor-in-Chief
Fan Jun	College education	Deputy Editor-in-Chief
Chen Lebo	Fudan University	Head of Chinese Economic News Dept
Lu Yi	College education	Head of Front-Page News Dept
Chen Hongbing	Fudan University, Journalism	Head of Theoretical Affairs Dept
Zhang Weiguo	East China Institute of Political Science & Law	Head of Beijing Bureau
Xu Xiaowei	College education	Head of Guangzhou Bureau
Shen Feihao	College education	Editor
Ruan Jiangning	People's University, Journalism	Editor
Chen Danhong	Fudan University, Journalism	Editor
He Ling	College education	Editor

Source: Li Cheng and Lynn T. White III, "China's technocratic movement and the World Economic Herald," *Modern China*, Vol. 17, No. 3

As discussed in the earlier chapters, these young journalists, under the influence of Western ideas of freedom and democracy, contributed greatly to the Herald's changing directions. In addition, the Editor-in-Chief Qin Benli played a crucial role in the Herald's change of direction. Qin wanted to push forward with China's reforms. The reasons for change of the Herald's reporting focus, therefore, can be summarized as due to: growing dissatisfaction towards the economic reforms; increased demand for political changes; the relative freedom the Chinese society enjoyed in the 1980s after a

series of reforms; Western influences; and last but the most important, the reform and liberal-minded leadership of Qin Benli.

Soon after the new editorial direction was determined, the Herald moved to play a new role in China's reforms. From then on, the Herald actively and explicitly called for political and economic changes, often admittedly from a "liberal" rather than "radical" perspective. The Herald now became the one publication that really represented the Chinese people and intellectuals, while at same time giving support to the reformers in the CCP. The new goal for the Herald was to bring the pressure of public opinion upon the CCP and to wake the desires of the Chinese people for freedom and democracy.

#### *Content of the Herald: 1985-1989*

##### General Trend

Starting from 1985 onwards, the Herald's reporting on political issues significantly increased. Table 4.3 below traces the number of articles relating to political issues in the Herald from 1980 to 1989. It shows that the Herald expanded its coverage on political issues during its nine year of publication.

Table 4.3. Yearly Distribution of Articles Relating to Political Affairs

Year	Number of Articles	Percent of Total
1980	0	0.0%
1981	2	0.3%
1982	11	1.8%
1983	14	2.3%
1984	15	2.5%
1985	18	3.0%
1986	112	18.7%
1987	58	9.6%
1988	227	37.9%
1989	141	23.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>598</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: *Shijie jingji daobao:1980-1989* [The World Economic Herald: 1980-1989], in microfilm. Shanghai: *Zhongguo shijie jingji xuehui* [China Society of World Economics]: *Shanghai shehui kexue yuan shijie jingji yanjiusuo* [World Economics Institute of Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences],

As the table above indicates, the Herald at its beginning (1980) had no interest in political issues. And during its first stage of life (1981-1985), the Herald's interest in political issues was very limited - there were only about 60 articles related to political issues during these five years, which accounted for 10 percent of the total number of articles. Yet, the situation changed drastically after 1985. From 1985 onwards, the articles on political reforms increased significantly. Indeed, 1986 saw the first peak of the Herald's reporting on political issues--about 112 articles on politics published in the year, which is about two times of the number of articles in its previous five years. In 1987, while the Herald's reporting on politics had a continuous growth, it decreased slightly compared to 1986; still, it outnumbered the total number of the paper's articles reported in its first five years. 1988 was another peak of the Herald's bold reporting. The reporting on political issues increased again in

1988; there were about 223 articles in total on political issues, which accounted for 37.9 percent of the total number of articles. And this trend of growth continued in 1989 until the end of the paper. As we already know, the Herald was closed down by the Chinese government in May, 1989. But even for the first five months of 1989, the Herald had a total number of 141 articles on political subjects, which even exceeded the years of 1986 and 1987. To sum up, the Herald's coverage of political issues had a continuous increase between the years 1986 and 1989, particularly the years 1986, 1988 and 1989, in which the number of articles accounted for 80.2 percent of the total number of articles published during the nine year period.

In order to get a clearer idea of how dissident the Herald was, it is necessary to examine the types of political issues the Herald reported. Table 4.4 below shows the number of different categories of content the Herald dealt with each year:

TABLE 4.4. Number of Different Categories of Political Issues Dealt with Each Year

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of Categories</b>
1980	0
1981	2
1982	5
1983	5
1984	8
1985	9
1986	20
1987	14
1988	30
1989	32

Source: *Shijie jingji daobao: 1980-1989* [The World Economic Herald: 1980-1989], in



microfilm. Shanghai: *Zhongguo shijie jingji xuehui* [China Society of World Economics]: *Shanghai shehui kexue yuan shijie jingji yanjiusuo* [World Economics Institute of Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences],

The findings, in correspondence to the general trend as discussed earlier, show that the Herald's reporting categories increased year by year. One apparent trend is that the Herald expanded its coverage of issues relating to China's political reforms from 1985 onwards. It had a great increase during the years from 1986 to 1989; particularly the years 1988 and 1989 witnessed the highest reported by the Herald--30 out of a total of 35 categories. Yet, 1987 was a downturn for the Herald, which only had 14 categories in the year. The ups and downs of the Herald's political reporting can be explained by the interplay between the Herald's political activism and the changing political climate in China.

Table 4.5 presents a detailed outlook of the focus of the Herald's reporting:

TABLE 4.5 Categories of the Herald's Political Reporting: 1980-1989

Category	Cumulative Number	Percent Total of
Integration of economic reform and political reform	121	20.2%
Rule by Law	53	8.8%
Democratization	58	9.6%
Press freedom	47	7.8%
Openness	42	7.0%
Four cardinal principles	30	5.0%
Institutionalization	26	4.3%
Relations between press and political reforms	25	4.1%
Decentralization of power	25	4.1%
Political corruption	22	3.6%
Neo-authoritarianism	18	3.0%
Constitution	16	2.6%
Bureaucracy	15	2.5%
Modernization of leadership	14	2.3%
Differentiation of Party and Government	13	2.1%
Pluralism	10	1.6%
Popular participation in politics	9	1.5%
Multi-party system	9	1.5%
Transparency	8	1.3%
Economic determinism	8	1.3%
Election	8	1.3%
Human rights	8	1.3%
Censorship	2	0.3%
Propaganda	2	0.3%
Class struggle	2	0.3%
Press autonomy	1	0.1%
Others	6	0.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>598</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: *Shijie jingji daobao: 1980-1989* [The World Economic Herald: 1980-1989], in microfilm. Shanghai: *Zhongguo shijie jingji xuehui* [China Society of World Economics]: *Shanghai shehui kexue yuan shijie jingji yanjiusuo* [World Economics Institute of Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences],

As the findings indicate, the Herald was interested most in topics of integration, rule of law, democracy, and openness of the government.

Among others, integration--integration of economic and political reforms - was the most popular and enduring topic in the Herald. During the nine years of publication, articles related to integration were 121, which accounted for 20.2 percent of the total. In addition, the Herald was also actively engaged in talking about institutionalization, decentralization of power, corruption, press freedom and neo- authoritarianism.

### *Discussion*

The year 1986 was important for China. From late 1985 onwards, popular demand for political reforms increased continuously until 1989. The increased popular demand for political reform consequently promoted a nation-wide pro-democracy student movement later in the year. Under the leadership of Editor-in-Chief Qin Benli, the Herald decided to join the majority--to be a voice for political reforms. As pointed out earlier, the changing political climate in China had been a crucial reason in explaining why the Herald's coverage in 1986 of issues relative to political change stood in significant contrast to 1985. As two former Herald staff members noted, the Herald covered many issues on China's political reform since the latter half of 1986 and advocated that "economic reforms would make progress only if political reforms were carried out."<sup>84</sup>

Beginning in April 1986, the Herald's reporting on political issues

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<sup>84</sup> Meirong Yang, "The Case of the World Economic Herald", 190.

suddenly increased. This trend of growth continued until the end of the paper in May 1989. In 1986, the year's focus was largely on the integration of economic and political reforms. The paper also started to talk about the importance of democracy. In May 1986, in memorization of the May Fourth Movement, the Herald spent the whole month talking about the legacies of May Fourth Movement and, more importantly, its implications for China's future reforms. For example, on the issue of May 19, 1986 was entirely devoted to rethinking the May Fourth Movement. Under the title "A New May Fourth Movement Is Emerging," the Herald pointed out that just as what the May Fourth Movement intellectuals tried hard to promote—"political democracy, academic freedom, and economic prosperity—should be the three fundamental and inseparable factors for the nation's development."

In the same issue, there were two important articles written by Professor Su Shaozhi, former dean of the CCP Central Marxism-Leninism Institute. One was "The Direction of Political Reform Is Democratization," and another is "Study New Projects in Political Theory". Both articles were based on his visit to the former Communist country Hungary. In the articles, Su pointed out that the key problem for China's future reforms was the problem of single interest. As Su wrote, single interest theory claims that in a socialist country, people's interests have absolute congruity. Any other interests would be wrong and enemies of the people, therefore they must be suppressed. This, however, hindered further reforms in these countries; China faced the same situation.

The Hungarian government realized this problem and had already started to change, which could serve as an example for the Chinese government to study. The two articles were important as they could be viewed as the Herald's opening to public discussion of democracy. Such a bold public discussion was the first to occur since the founding of the PRC in 1949.

On May 26, 1986, there was a piece entitled "The Reforms and the Development of a Political System in China" by Cheng Leibao, a journalist at the Herald's Beijing branch. In the article, Cheng said that in order to transform the old economic system to a new one and to further the economic reforms, it was necessary to reform the existing political system. More importantly, the article pointed out that democracy was one crucial factor in balancing powers between the state and Party. The article criticized Mao Zedong's theory that democracy and centralization are contradictory. From Cheng's point, there was no philosophical or logical relationship between democracy and centralization. Also in the same issue, there were several other articles that should be mentioned. One is "Economic Reforms Will Eventually Lead To Completely Open Reforms," in which the writer said: "China will inevitably open itself completely to the outside world, and this is not only limited to the fields of scientific technique and economic management...the 'Self-Strengthening' movement failed because the Qing government did not aim for complete reform, the CCP needs to learn from

history.”<sup>86</sup> Another article was entitled, “Academic Prosperity Is Dependent on Freedom and Democracy.” Without freedom, it argued, there would be no room for scholars and intellectuals to express themselves freely and to pursue the truth.

On June 9, 1986, the Herald brought up the reforms in Hungary again. The Herald pointed out that the Hungarian government was actively modernizing of its political structure. It told the Chinese people that China’s reform also needed complete change, like Hungary’s. On June 30, 1986, journalist Ruan Jiangning wrote a piece on political reforms. In answering the question of “why past political reforms did not achieve success,” Ruan said, those reforms “never touch the fundamental structure of the political system.”<sup>87</sup> From his point of view, the major problem was over-centralization of political powers. The key for change therefore should be in the political system, particularly the system of checks and balance. Most importantly, China’s political reform needed to be practical.

On August 4, 1986, the Herald allocated its front page to publish a talk by Wan Li, a core member of the Central Political Bureau. Wan Li told the Herald, “China now needs to develop a socialist democracy; in particular it needs to promote the democratization of science.”<sup>88</sup> Wan also called for openness and transparency in governmental activities. On August 18, the city mayor of Shen Zhen told the Herald, “The experimentation with political

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<sup>86</sup> See SJJDB, May 26, 1986.

<sup>87</sup> See SJJDB,, June 30, 1986. 2.

<sup>88</sup> See SJJDB,, August 4, 1986. 1.

reform in Shekou demonstrated that the promotion of democracy has positive effects on Chinese society. It has particular importance for the country's future development...so we need to establish a system of democracy, and a healthy system of law will help achieve this".<sup>89</sup> On August 25, 1986, the Herald spoke boldly, "only after the Party achieves modernization, can it lead China to modernization."<sup>90</sup> To reform the Party structure thus was the key for systematic political reforms.

The contents and views reported in the Herald were getting sharper and sharper. General discussions about political reforms inevitably led to calls for the CCP to reform the Party itself. Discussions of concepts of freedom and democracy led to calls for increased freedom and democracy by law. Discussions about cultural reforms led to calls for the CCP and the Chinese people to learn lessons from failures of the past – particularly the Cultural Revolution. On September 22, 1986, the Herald published a special issue to discuss Mao's Cultural Revolution from a scholarly perspective. Under the title "Deep Analysis of the Ten Years of Calamity," the Herald tried to evaluate the Cultural Revolution. In regarding the issue, many experts and professors expressed their ideas through the Herald. Their main points were: the basic factors that caused the Cultural Revolution were the lack of democratic systems inside the CCP; the lack of an independent legal and judicial system, and the lack of a strong constitutional system in China. The Herald boldly

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<sup>89</sup> See SJJDB, August 18, 1986.

<sup>90</sup> See SJJDB, August 25, 1986.

claimed that without a fundamental change on the Party's ideology, the Cultural Revolution would come back and happen again. The Herald concluded: China will move forward positively only by eliminating rule by dictatorship.<sup>91</sup>

On October 27, 1986, the Herald stated, "The whole world now is watching China's political reforms, China must take some action....the economic democratization should be the new goal for the Chinese government to pursue."<sup>92</sup> Undoubtedly, the Herald was highly active in promoting social change in China. The bold reporting of the Herald in the latter half of 1986 caused a tide of liberalism to sweep through intellectuals and college students. Nearly all intellectuals who held different opinions from the Party line or those who wanted to offer creative ideas about political and economic reforms chose to send their articles to the Herald. Dissidents found a place where their opinions could be voiced. In this sense, the Herald successfully promoted the growth of dissident voices among the Chinese people. It successfully aroused the Chinese people's desire for change.

The year 1987 was marked a downturn in the Herald's reporting zeal on political issues. The year also was also a marked downturn by China's political reforms generally. In this year, the pro-democracy student movement was suppressed by conservatives in the CCP and, as a result, the

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<sup>91</sup> See SJJDB, September 22, 1986, 14.

<sup>92</sup> See SJJDB, October 27, 1986.1.



reform-minded leader Hu Yaobang was charged with encouraging the student movement, labeled “bourgeois liberalization.” Hu was forced to leave his position as the Party’s General Secretary. With the loss of political patronage, the Herald reduced its coverage of sensitive political issues. The Herald switched to a lower profile in order to survive under the censorship of the Chinese government. As Wright pointed out, “Qin Benli and his staff were adapting at gauging the political climate, lying low”.<sup>93</sup> Hence in the year 1987, the Herald reported more economic issues than political matters. Nevertheless, the paper didn’t give up its political enthusiasm. Although in a relatively smaller number, the paper maintained an enthusiasm for political reporting throughout the year.

For example, on March 9, 1987, the Herald devoted heavy coverage to Mikhail Gorbachev’s reforms in the Soviet Union. Under the bold headline “The Course of the Reform is Irreversible,” the Herald introduced the current reforms in the Soviet Union, and by doing this, the Herald wanted to let the CCP know that reform could not be stopped once it started. Any efforts to stop the reform would be in vain. In the same issue, another important article was “If We Want to Reform, A Political Reform Must Have to Be Taken.” This article analyzed the progresses of reform in the Soviet Union, and pointed out that the fundamental problem of reform in the Soviet Union was its political system. Apparently, in this year, since the discussion of political issues in

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<sup>93</sup> Kate Wright, “The political fortunes”,121.

China became highly sensitive and dangerous, the Herald decided to adopt the strategy of “stones from other hills.” That is, by talking about political reforms in other countries such as the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc, the Herald avoided talking about China directly. But the things that happened in other countries served as an illustrative example for China. By means of this comparison, the Herald intellectuals insinuated the problems of the former Communist countries, and implied their experiences could serve examples for China.

On July 13, 1987, the headlines on the front page of the Herald stated: “political reform is the pre-requirement and guarantee of economic reform...now the major problem is the relationship between the Party and government. The core for the problems of the function of Party is the relationship between the Party and the state.”<sup>94</sup> This article re-stated that the key problem in China was “the over-centralization of power.” In order to solve this, the economy must be determined by market, since economic democratization will eventually cause political democratization. In the issue of August 3, 1987, Sun Wei, Provincial Party Committee Secretary of Heilongjiang, argued “the Chinese government needs to adopt the separation of powers and party politics, and by doing this, it can effectively curb the growth of corruption.”<sup>95</sup>

On August 17, 1987, the front page of the Herald carried a piece entitled,

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<sup>94</sup> See SJJDB, July 13, 1987.1.

<sup>95</sup> See SJJDB, August 3, 1978. 8.

“The Communist Party Members Need Democracy As Much As They Need Air to Breathe.” This article stated, “Chinese government officials have too much power to interfere in others’ lives. The birth of corruption occurred because the society lacked strong law regulations...therefore political reform is needed in order to move further on the reforms in China”.<sup>96</sup>

Noteworthy to mention, starting from late 1987, the Herald began to publish news and reports about privatization, such as “Privatization Sweeps across Africa”, “Privatization Movement in Turkey,” and “Privatization Is A General Trend for the World Economy.”<sup>97</sup> By reporting the privatization process in other countries, the Herald tried to tell readers that privatization was the only medicine for curing the ills of socialist countries. The Herald believed that the emerging middle class would be a strong supporting base for democracy in China. And a privatized, market price-oriented economy would gradually help the development of political democracy in China.

In 1988, the zeal for political reforms rose again. After the anti-bourgeois liberalism campaign, the demand for political democratization increased again and reached another peak. Under the leadership of Zhao Ziyang, reformers reappeared with a stronger inclination for political reforms. Moving with the political winds, the Herald reappeared with a high profile. The paper became more critical of China’s need for political reform and,

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<sup>96</sup> See SJJDB, August 17, 1978.1.

<sup>97</sup> See SJJDB, September 14, 1987.

compared with previous years, presented an even stronger stand.

On January 1, 1988, the front page of the Herald published an article by Yu Haocheng, which called for re-thinking of the political system. The article argued, “the first thing the government needs to do is to make certain the separation of the government and the party, and the independence of the judiciary.”<sup>98</sup> Li Jun, in his article, stated, “the fundamental problem for reform is the problem of people’s thought...when you get deep into reform, the first thing encountered is the opposition of old ideas...the old concepts hence must therefore be eliminated, or else they will cause the failure of reform.”<sup>99</sup>

Different from previous years, the Herald began to talk actively about press freedom and press reform in 1988. In 1988, one of the big focuses of the Herald was on press freedom. In April, the Herald devoted great efforts to organize discussions on press freedom. The issue of April 11 was a special edition which organized a discussion on press freedom. Entitled, “Discussion of Political Reform From Both Inside and Outside China,” the issue included articles such as: Zhao Haosheng, “It’s A Failure For All Publications To Represent the Voices of Government;” Fan Rongkang, “Reporting Won’t Cause Instability, Blocking Information Will Do;” Zhao Chaogou, “No Press Law, No Government Transparency” and Jiang Peide, “The Urgent Need For Press Laws.” In their discussions, the first priority was to establish press laws. According to them, national stability is

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<sup>98</sup> See SJJDB, January 11, 1988.1.

<sup>99</sup> See SJJDB, January 11, 1988.13.

attainable only after the establishment of a fair and effective system of press law. Press laws can prevent political corruption and promote genuine stability. For a government to get support from its people, information transparency is a must.

Gong Xiangrui, a professor of Law from Peking University, in his “The Key for Political Reform to Succeed Is to Promote Democracy,” stated that the key to China’s political reform was the adoption of democratic politics, which should include press freedom, political pluralism, transparency of the government, decentralization of power, and popular participation.<sup>100</sup> Gong went further pointing out that, currently, the most important thing the government had to do was to integrate political reforms with economic reforms, and to liberalize the control of the press.

On April 25, 1988, Zhang Zhonghou wrote a piece stating, “the success of reform is dependent on the realization of citizen’s subject consciousness...the press is responsible for delivering the truth to the people.”<sup>101</sup> Liu Zaifu, in the issue of May 23, pointed out that “it is extremely important to abandon the old mode of class-struggle thinking, and to establish new modes of reform and innovation.”<sup>102</sup>

On May 30, 1988, the Herald used bold type to state “The Trend for Reform Is Irreversible.” The issue of July 18 discussed the failure of Nikita Khrushchev’s reform in Soviet Union. The Herald analyzed the reasons for

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<sup>100</sup> See SJJDB, April 18, 1988.

<sup>101</sup> See SJJDB, April 25, 1988.13.

<sup>102</sup> See SJJDB, April 25, 1988.

the failure of the reform in the Soviet Union and articulated the needs for China to learn lessons from the Soviet Union. On the front page of August 15, 1988, the Herald carried a piece, entitled “Reform: What We Really Need?” in which the article talked about the importance of the establishment of rule of law. In the same issue, Zhang Shuyi, a professor from Peking University, wrote a piece analyzing the origins of political problems - total government control. From the Herald’s point of view, press reform was an inseparable part of political reform. Indeed, press reform was one basis for supporting political reform.

In 1989, along with the Chinese people’s increased zeal for political reforms, the Herald’s discussion of political reform and press freedom became more intense. On the first issue of 1989, the headline of the front page was the one written by Hu Jiwei, “Establish Democratic Theory, Promote Democratic Politics,” in which Hu asked for political reforms based on democracy.<sup>103</sup> On January 9 of that issue, a professor from China’s People’s University published a piece entitled “Judicial Independence Is the Crucial Component of Political System Reform.” In this article, Wang pointed out that the problems caused by reforms so far were actually due to the lagging pace of the political reform, and that one crucial factor behind this was the lack of separation of Party and government.<sup>104</sup> Also in the same issue, large

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<sup>103</sup> See SJJDB, January 2, 1989.

<sup>104</sup> See SJJDB, January 9, 1989.

coverage was allocated to discussion of the democratic political environment of Western countries. Articles included: “Look at How America Prevents Corruption of Government Officials,” “The Transparency and Freedom of Western Politics”, and “Comments on Hungarian Political Reform: Political Pluralism as the Basis for Success.”

It is clear that during the year 1989, the Herald spent more effort and coverage on promoting democracy in China. This was reflected in heavy reporting on democracy and corruption. In the issue of January 16, 1989, the Herald spent a whole page discussing why corruption was so prevalent at the beginning of modernization. The discussion concluded that the problem was due to lagging political reforms and the lack of healthy legal mechanisms. On January 23, Gong Yuzhi wrote a piece entitled “Study Capitalism Is a Way to Construct Socialism,” which called for rethinking and reconsidering Capitalism. Gong argued that it was not necessary to totally reject Capitalism. In contrast, we need to study the good things of Capitalism in order to help Socialism develop in China.

On the front page of issue March 13, 1989, the Herald spent a whole page discussing the importance of information transparency. The paper stated, “The transparency of information is the basis and requirement for citizens to participate in politics”.<sup>105</sup> In the same issue, Xiao Gongqin, a History professor from Shanghai Normal University wrote a long piece on the

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<sup>105</sup> See SJJDB, March 13, 1989. 1.

future of China's reforms. Xiao stated, "If we want the reforms to be successful, the system of checks and balances is the way we must go for China's future reforms."<sup>106</sup>

On the front page of April 8, 1989, the Herald published a survey it conducted among the Chinese people, which asked for "the most urgent problem China needs to solve." The Herald reported, in response to this question that the majority of people thought the need to deepen reforms, and to further promote democratic politics were the most important things China needed to do. In this issue, the head of the Institute of Politics from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Yan Jiaqi, wrote a piece, claiming that, "the failure and all problems caused by reforms are due to the lack of a political responsibility system, the hope for China to move on and to develop is based on the adoption of democracy and rule of law."<sup>107</sup>

On April 15, 1989, Liu Qiang, member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) told the reporters of the Herald, "political democracy is not only a choice of government, but also the trend of the world democracy movement."<sup>108</sup> Wang Yizhou, a researcher from the Institution of World Economy and Politics discussed the differences and similarities of reforms in the Soviet Union and China and concluded that press freedom was the basis for social security and democratic society.

As the time went by, the reporting of the Herald became more and

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<sup>106</sup> See SJJDB, March 13, 1989. 11.

<sup>107</sup> See SJJDB, April 8, 1989. 11.

<sup>108</sup> See SJJDB, April 15, 1989. 2.



more critical and bold. Discussion of press freedom and political democracy became more and more heightened. On the front page for May 1, 1989, the Herald used bold type stating, “We need a free environment to tell truth and express ourselves freely...a corrupt government will only eat its own bitter fruit.”<sup>109</sup> On May 8, Hu Jiwei wrote: “If no press freedom, then no real social security...democracy is the essential basis for the development of social security.”<sup>110</sup> The Herald spent large coverage telling the people that press privatization is needed for China. As the Herald wrote, the basic function of the press should be to tell the truth to the public. If the press continued to be used as a political tool, China’s reforms had no hope, no room to move forward. The Herald insisted on this view and maintained its bold voice until it was closed down by the Chinese government in late May 1989.

### The Evolution of the Herald’s Political Reporting

The above discussion concerns the evolution of the Herald as a dissident newspaper. The following discussion is aimed to present a more detailed picture of the Herald’s evolution in political reporting. The headlines, among other things, indicated what the story was about or what the argument of the article was. The following headlines, in a chronological order, are grouped into five sub-categories. They are aimed to illustrate the evolution of the Herald’s reporting on political issues between the years 1986 and 1989.

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<sup>109</sup> See SJJDB, May 1, 1989.1.

<sup>110</sup> See SJJDB, May 8, 1989.1.

## **Political Reform in General**

“China’s Political Reform Needs to Be Practical” (July 7, 1986)

“The Party Must Be Separated From the Government” (July 14, 1986)

“Eliminate Corruption and Move towards a Democratized and Efficient Political System” (July 21, 1986)

“The Need of Transparency for Government Activities” (August 4, 1986)

“Change the Party’s Leadership Is the Way to Political System Reform” (August 25, 1986)

“The Separation of Party from the Government Is the Only Way to Curb Bureaucracy and Corruption” (August 3, 1978)

“Rethinking Political Reform and Rule of Law: The Need to Separate Party from the Government” (January 11, 1988)

“Institutionalizing Democratic Rights” (April, 18, 1988)

“A Corrupt Government Will Only Eat Its Own Bitter Fruit” (May 1, 1988)

“The Future for China’s Reform: The Reform of Political System” (July 18, 1988)

“Checks and Balance of Power: the only way to success in China’s reform” (October 17, 1988)

“The Inadequacies of China’s Current Political System Reform” (April 8, 1989)

“Never Allow Money and Power To Get Mingled” (January 9, 1989)

“The Independence of Law and Judiciary Is the Basis for Political Reform”

(January 9, 1989)

“Why Is Corruption Easy To Develop When Economic Modernization Takes Off” (January 16, 1989)

“The Problems Caused By Lack of the System of Checks and Balance”  
(January 23, 1989)

### **Democracy and Democratization**

“Academic Prosperity Is Dependent Upon Freedom and Democracy” (May 26, 1986)

“Democracy Is A Must Step to Modernization” (June 2, 1986)

“Communist Party Members Need Democracy as Much as They Need Fresh Air” (August 17, 1987)

“The Key to Political Reform Is Political Democratization” (April 18, 1988)

“The Trend for Democratization Is Inevitable and Irreversible” (May 30, 1988)

“Criticism and democracy” (August 29, 1988)

“No Political Democratization, No Real Stability” (May 1, 1988)

“From rule by man to rule by law” (June 20, 1988)

“Establish Democracy Theories, Promote Political Democracy” (January 2, 1989)

“Judicial independence is part of political reform” (January 9, 1989)

“The Urgent Problem for China Now Is To Promote Democracy” (April 8,

1988)

“Political Democracy Cannot Be Chosen By the Government, But It Is the Trend for World Democratization” (April 15, 1988)

“Government should be supervised by the public” (May 8, 1989)

“Democracy Is the Only Basis for Social Security” (May 8, 1989)

### **Press Freedom and Press Reform**

“Social Progress Needs Freedom of Speech” (February 8, 1988)

“All Publications Are the Representation of the Government Is a Failure for the Press” (April 11, 1988)

“Reporting Won’t Cause Instability, Blocking Information Will Do” (April 11, 1988)

“Reporters Have the Responsibility To Tell the Truth” (April 11, 1988)

“No Press Law, No Press Freedom” (April 11, 1988)

“Create a Favorable Environment for Press Reform” (October 3, 1988)

“Why Is the Issue of Press Privatization Avoided” (May 8, 1989)

“Press Freedom Is the Basis for Social Security and Democratization” (May 8, 1989)

“No Press Freedom, No Real Society Security” (May 8, 1989)

“There Would Be No Genuine Stability without Press Freedom” (May 8, 1989)

“We Need an Environment in Which We Can Speak Truth Freely” (May 1,

1989)

“Press Supervision Is the Obligation of Journalist Rather Than a Favor Given By Government Officials” (April 24, 1989)

### **Relations between Economic and Political Reform**

“Economic Reform Will Eventually Lead To a Completely Reform” (May 26, 1986)

“Political Reform: from whisper to the front stage” (June 30, 1986)

“Political Reform Should Start From the Very Top of the Leadership” (July 28, 1986)

“Firmly Pushing Ahead Economic and Political Reforms” (May 26, 1986)

“Political Reform Is the Guarantee of the Economic Reform” (September 29, 1986)

“Economic Democratization Is A Way to Political Democratization” (November 13, 1986)

“Political Reform Is the Guarantee for the Success of Economic Reform” (July 13, 1987)

“Political Reform Is the Guarantee for China’s Reforms” (August 17, 1988)

“The Key to Political Reform Is Realization of Democratic Politics” (June 27, 1988)

“Economic Democratization Will Lead To Political Democratization” (July 13, 1988)

“Political Reform Must Go a Step Ahead” (October 3, 1988)

“Study Capitalism Is the Must Way to Construct Socialism” (January 23, 1989)

“Economic Reform Cannot Be Separated From Political Reform: seminar on comparative study of Chinese and Soviet reforms” (March 6, 1989)

Table. 4.6 The Herald’s Reporting on Political Issues: 1980-1989

Year/Topic	Political Reform	Democratization	Integration	Press Freedom
1980	0	0	0	0
1981	0	0	1	0
1982	3	0	2	0
1983	6	0	5	0
1984	6	1	3	0
1985	4	3	1	1
1986	23	13	36	1
1987	7	3	21	2
1988	52	19	30	12
1989	23	11	22	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>34</b>

Source: *Shijie jingji daobao: 1980-1989* [The World Economic Herald: 1980-1989], in microfilm. Shanghai: *Zhongguo shijie jingji xuehui* [China Society of World Economics]; *Shanghai shehui kexue yuan shijie jingji yanjiusuo* [World Economics Institute of Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences],

The above examples indicate that although the Herald changed its reporting policy from economic-oriented to political-oriented after 1985, the paper’s reporting on political issues had a sub-evolution—it evolved gradually.

It is clear that in 1986, the Herald’s reporting on political issues was largely focused on government administrative reforms. It asked for greater openness and transparency for the government’s operation. The Herald also opposed political corruption and centralization of the Party’s power. It asked

for separation of the Party from the government. In the same year, another major area of the Herald's focus was relations between economic and political reforms. It articulated clearly that in order to further push economic reforms forward, political reforms was necessary. Yet, in 1986, democracy, political democratization, and the freedom of press were not the primary concerns of the Herald - they were not mentioned much. The Herald shifted its focus to political democratization only after 1986. Starting from 1987, the Herald's reporting coverage on democracy and democratization increased significantly, and more importantly, it became increasingly bold and critical, reaching a peak in 1988 and 1989. In 1988 and 1989, the Herald discussed a wide range of issues central to political democratization in China. The Herald's active engagement in the discussion of press reform began after 1987. In early 1988, the Herald devoted several special editions to press freedom and press reform. The paper made a strong call for freedom of the press, which later became a key slogan of the student protest in the 1989 Pro-democracy Movement. In general, the headlines noted above were illustrative of the boldness of the Herald in its advocacy. Citizens should be allowed to voice their views and to criticize the Party and government. The press should be given a free hand to inform the people of what was happening. To sum up, as the above discussion suggests, the Herald's political reporting evolved gradually over time. It started from a relatively moderate position in discussing of political issues to a later bold and critical stance on political

reforms. Without doubt, the Herald was outspokenly daring in pushing forward an agenda for political development in China.

The paper was closed down by the Chinese government in May 1989. The paper was criticized as a forum for propagating liberalization. It advocated a multi-party system in politics, directed to the West in culture, and advertised privatization in economy. As the People's Daily said, "The Herald belittled the Socialist system and praised the Capitalist system, saying that while Capitalists worry about too much fat, socialists are tortured by too much lean."<sup>111</sup> The Herald was accused of being the major source of the turmoil in Shanghai in 1989.

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<sup>111</sup> See RMRB, December 5, 1989, 5.



## **V. Conclusion**

The Herald was closed down by the Chinese government in early May 1989. The paper was charged with promoting political democracy and causing social instability in China. The chief editor Qin Benli was removed from his position and forced to undergo self-criticism. Qin died of stomach cancer on April 15, 1991. As many scholars have already noted, the closing of the Herald ignited Chinese people's desire for political change. As a result, massive groups of students marched into the streets and asked for greater political freedom on June 4, 1989. After the crackdown on student protests on June 4, 1989, China entered into a politically more conservative period. The government's control of the press has increased so that the press now is under much tighter control by the government.

As this study shows, the Herald had a profound influence on Chinese society in the 1980s. By introducing advanced thoughts and bold criticisms about both negative and positive sides of the reform, the paper greatly enlightened people, especially college students and intellectuals. The 1980s was a special period for China. After the end of the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese government launched a series of reforms in China. These reforms opened China to the outside World and liberalized Chinese society to a certain degree. It was in this historical context that the Herald was born and flourished. Established as an economic newspaper, the Herald successfully prospered by sticking closely to the government's reform policies. The Chinese government's priority of economic reforms directly helped the

development of the Herald. And in turn, the Herald also contributed to the development of the nation's economic reforms. As other scholars have pointed out, there was a positive interplay between the Herald and China's economic reforms. As Chang Won Ho observed, among the economic newspapers generated in those years, the Herald could be counted "as an authority on both world and national economic issues."<sup>112</sup>

The Herald's nine year life-span can be divided into two stages. The first is from 1980 to 1985, and the second is from 1986 to 1989. The Herald in its first period was an "economic herald," and a "political herald" in the second period. Between the years of 1980 and 1985, the Herald could be viewed as a "mouthpiece" of the government. The paper reported on government reform policies in a timely manner. Due to strong support from renowned scholars and government officials, the Herald never hesitated to be bold in what it published. And in turn, the insightful reporting and bold criticisms helped the Herald gain support from the government. In fact, the Herald won strong support from the reformers in the CCP. Prime Minister Zhao Ziyang was the most powerful "back mountain" for the Herald.

However, during the early years' of reform, its focus was primarily on the economic sphere. Political reform lagged far behind. With the deepening of reforms after 1985, many problems emerged and posed serious threats to China's reform projects. People's voices for political change

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<sup>112</sup> Chang, *Mass Media in China*, 128.

increased tremendously. Along with the changing political climate, the Herald shifted its reporting focus from economics to politics, and gradually challenged the Party line. In fact, the course of the Herald's development mirrored the trajectory ups and downs of policy changes which shock China in the 1980s. In the words of Liu Binyan, "At the media sphere, 1985 was the worst year to date, and 1987 was far worse because of the antiliberalization campaign."<sup>113</sup> This point could be made also for Herald. The Herald increased its political reporting in late 1985, reaching its first peak in 1986. 1987, however, was a nadir for the Herald's political reporting because the government tightened controls on the press as well as on the reformers. Yet, 1988 and 1989 witnessed a resurgence, reaching another peak of the Herald's political zeal. These two years also were the peak of the Chinese people's demands for political reform and political freedom.

In the years between 1986 and 1989, the Herald was actively engaged in promoting political reforms, democratization, integration of political with economic reforms, and press freedom. The reasons for the Herald's decision to move towards a "political herald," as discussed in this study, were 1) the changing political climate of the 1980s; 2) the reform-minded leadership of Qin Benli and young politically active intellectuals. Under the reform-minded leadership of Qin Benli, and liberal minded new editors, the

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<sup>113</sup> Liu Binyan, "Press Freedom: Particles in the Air" in Chin-Chuan Lee, *Voices of China: the Interplay of Politics and Journalism*, New York : Guilford Press, 1990. Also see, Liu Binyan, *A Higher Kind of Loyalty : a memoir by China's foremost journalist*, New York : Pantheon Books, 1990.

Herald maintained its bold voice and political enthusiasm throughout the years from 1986 to 1989.

Scholars often characterize the Herald as an “unofficial” newspaper that was distinct from the government control [Wright, 1990; Hsiao and Yang, 1989].<sup>114</sup> This view, however, simplifies and obscures complex relationships that the Herald had with the Chinese reform-minded officials, particularly the Zhao Ziyang and Hu Yaobang administration. Not only reformers, but also the Chinese government gave certain amounts of support to the Herald during its early years from 1980 to 1985. That is why so many newspapers, including government controlled ones such as the People’s Daily, wrote to congratulate the paper on its fifth anniversary in 1985.

Although the Herald was financially independent, the Herald was not completely independent from the control of the government. Close ties with government officials gave the Herald unusual protection in support of the high quality news and commentaries of the Herald. However, this close relationship had its problems too. When the reformers lost power in 1987, the Herald lost its protection, too, and consequently faced the possibility of being closed down. In other words, the Herald tied its fate and editorial directions to the reformers in the CCP. This certainly helped the paper’s development in its early life. However, with the unstable situation in China’s politics of the late 1980s, it was not surprising that the Herald had a short life.

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<sup>114</sup> See Kate Wright, “The political fortunes”: 121-132.  
Hsiao Ching-chang and Yang Mei-rong, “Don’t Force to Lie”: 111-121

To illustrate, for example, the circulation of the Herald had a tremendous increase during its first five years from 1980 to 1989, and then the paper's circulation dropped after 1985 (see table 3.2). One possible reason was the reduced support and subscriptions from the government. As discussed in previous chapters, the Chinese government gave great initial support to the Herald. Government controlled newspapers such as the People's Daily publicly praised the Herald. However, with the Herald's increased reporting on sensitive political issues, the Chinese government gradually withdrew its support. The reduced subscription from the government might be one reason behind the Herald's reduced circulation during later period.

The Herald has been commonly understood as a dissident newspaper. However, by tracing the founding and development of the Herald, we can see that the Herald was not established as a dissident newspaper. At the beginning, the editors did not have a long-term goal for the paper. They developed their long-term goal only after the paper gained support from readers as well as from reformers. The paper's move towards political dissidence was a gradual one. To call the Herald a dissident newspaper, it is necessary to make clear that this describes the Herald after 1985. Associated with the ups and downs of China's reforms, the Herald moved from a paper that once supported by government officials to one finally subjected to shutdown in May 1989. The Herald's development was dependent on the

reforms and the paper's eventual suspension was a politically tragic consequence of the reforms.

## GLOSSARY

Cha Bianqiu	擦边球
Chen Hansheng	陈翰笙
Chu Baoyi	褚葆一
Da Gongbao	大公报
Fan Rongkang	范荣康
Hu Jiwei	胡绩伟
Hu Yaobang	胡耀邦
Gong Xiangrui	龚祥瑞
Jiang Peide	蒋培德
Jiang Zemin	江泽民
Jiefang Ribao	解放日报
Liu Zaifu	刘再复
Liu Binyan	刘宾雁
Lu Dingyi	陆定一
Ma Hong	马洪
Qian Junrui	钱俊瑞
Qin Benli	钦本立
Renmin Ribao	人民日报
Ruan Jiangning	阮江宁
Shanghai Qingnian bao	上海青年报
Shekou	蛇口
Shen Zhen	深圳
Shen Bao	申报
Shijie Jingji Daobao	世界经济导报
Sun Wei	孙维
Su Shaozhi	苏紹智
Sun Huairen	孙怀仁
Wan Li	万里
Wang Daohan	汪道涵
Wang Yizhou	王逸舟
Wang Xinxii	王欣新
Wenhui Bao	文汇报
Xiao Gongqin	萧功秦
Xin Wenbao	新闻报
Xinhua Yuekan	新华月刊
Xue Muqiao	薛暮桥
Xu Xuehan	徐雪寒
Yang Peixin	杨培新
Yan Jiaqi	严家其
Yuan Geng	袁庚
Yu Haocheng	于浩成
Yu Qihong	郁奇虹

Yu Guangyuan	于光远
Zhang Zhonghou	张宗厚
Zhao Ziyang	赵紫阳
Zhao Haosheng	赵浩生
Zhao Chaogou	赵超构
Zhang Shuyi	张顺义
Zhang Weiguo	张伟国
Zhu Houzhe	朱厚泽
Zhou Qi	周骐
Zhongguo xinwen nianjian	中国新闻年鉴



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